

BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship

Programme Handbook 2021-2023



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1. Introduction

The Social Worker degree apprenticeship is an innovative way to undertake social work training, while remaining as an employee in a role in Manchester Adult Social Care (ASC). This opportunity is funded via the [apprenticeship levy](#). In ASC we are committed to supporting existing experienced social care staff to progress their career and will assist apprentices to qualify via this route and move into a social work post in ASC at the earliest opportunity. It is a 30-month programme that will help you build upon your existing knowledge, skills and behaviours. You will receive academic teaching and practice-development opportunities that will enable you to learn and develop while contributing to social work delivery in ASC.

This route is based on the assessment of candidates against the [Social Worker degree apprenticeship standard](#). These standards comprise a number of different areas of development:

Knowledge – gained through formal learning and applied according to the environment.

Skills – acquired and demonstrated through continuous professional development in the workplace.

Behaviours – developed and exhibited in the workplace.

On a day-to-day basis, social work apprentices will be supported in their learning and development by a work-based mentor (usually their line manager) and a Skills Coach/tutor from the university. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) will provide the formal academic learning and assessment aspect of the programme

2. Roles and responsibilities

There are four key people needed to support the apprentice through this programme:

- their line manager (in most circumstances they would also act as the apprentice mentor)
- their university Skills Coach (allocated by the university)
- manager(s) of the team who offer any contrasted learning experience(s)
- the Social Work Consultant team.

It is most likely that the apprentice's existing line manager would take on the role of the apprentice mentor; however, this could be delegated to another experienced social worker within the organisation.

The mentor must be a registered social worker, but they do not need to be a practice educator, although similar skills and experience would benefit them in the role of the mentor. MMU run workshops for mentors introducing the apprenticeship and the role of the mentor – full details can be found on [this page](#).

The role of the apprentice mentor is to:

- Hold regular one-to-one supervision with the apprentice and discuss their progress against the apprenticeship standards.
- Enable wider learning through training, shadowing opportunities, and activities that stretch their learning in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship standards.
- Attend quarterly three-way meetings with the university Skills Coach (see below).
- Identify when an apprentice is not making sufficient progress against the standards, liaise with the Skills Coach, and offer appropriate support.

If the mentor is not also the line manager, then regular contact between the mentor and the line manager is required, to discuss progress and so that the apprentice can be offered suitable learning opportunities, as outlined above.

Both the line manager and mentor (if this is not the same person) should read and sign the apprentice line manager and apprentice mentor agreement.

The manager(s) of the team (s) in which the contrasted learning days take place will also support the apprentice while they are in that team, and there may also be support provided by a Practice Educator or Practice Supervisor.

The Social Work Consultants provide quarterly support groups with other apprentices to offer support, make sure the programme is functioning well, and provide the link between university and employment.

3. Programme structure and delivery

Year 1 of the taught programme begins in either September or March; it has been condensed into six months and will be assessed at level 4.

Year 2 starts six months later and is assessed at level 5. There is typically one day a week of university input across the programme, with two consecutive days at the start of every module; all university input is during work time.

Year 3 starts 12 months after year 2 and is assessed at level 6.

The programme takes 30 months to complete and, if successful, the apprentice will receive both an apprenticeship qualification and a degree in social work.

Social Worker Degree Apprenticeship – Programme Structure: 30 months

Year 1

Social work, Social Justice and the Lived Experience

Strengthening Relationships and Wellbeing

Ethical Practice for Professional Social Work

Society, Welfare and Global Inequalities

Year 2

Aspire

Critical Theory for Social Work Practice

Applied Skills and Methods for Social Work

Law, Rights and Safeguarding

Journeys Through the Life-Course; Social Work Practice and Policy

Year 3

Aspire

Applied Social Research and Evaluation for Practice

Critical and International Perspectives in Social

End Point Assessment

All details and the key aspects of the course at MMU can be found [here](#).

It gives you information about:

- apprentice line manager and mentor workshops.
- the course timetable
- the end-point assessment
- the MMU programme handbook
- the ASPIRE unit
- how to complete 'eAssessor' – the online portfolio
- off-the-job training
- safeguarding – keeping apprentices safe.

4. Off-the-job learning

Social work apprentices are required to undertake 20% off-the-job learning, and every employer who has signed up to support apprenticeships is committed to this level of staff absence. Off-the-job learning is described as:

'Any learning received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's regular working hours, for the purpose of achieving their apprenticeship. It needs to be directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard, teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours required to reach competence in the particular occupation.'

This course requires that the apprentice works a minimum of 30 hours per week and that a minimum of 20% of their contracted hours across the whole programme must be spent in off-the-job learning. This contributes to the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve the apprenticeship standard.

This 20% is a calculation based on the overall total time on the apprenticeship prior to the start of the end-point assessment (EPA). The apprentice should therefore spend 20% of their contracted hours undertaking a variety of learning activities, eg. formal learning activities at university, visiting other service areas, research, and attending sessions with the mentor.

The apprentice, their mentor and the Skills Coach will have access to the electronic learning log (eAssessor), which the apprentice should use regularly to log their off-the-job learning.

5. Review meetings – attended by the apprentice, their mentor and the Skills Coach

The purpose of each review is to check that the apprentice – and, ultimately, their employer – is getting the most out of their degree programme. It is important to monitor the apprentice's progress towards the standards at regular intervals, so that any concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. The Skills Coach will chair three progress reviews each year with the apprentice and their mentor (and their line manager if different). The review will support discussion around the following:

- university and work progress
- identification of any support needs
- SMART target setting
- development of the e-portfolio
- capturing skills and behavioural evidence in the workplace
- 20% off-the-job learning requirement.

These meetings will also provide an opportunity to review the evidence collated and make recommendations for areas of development based on current programme content. Reviews will be carried out either in person or via video meeting.

The employer's role in the review

During the review it is expected that the manager and/or mentor will provide input on the following:

- how the apprentice is progressing in the workplace
- their progress towards the apprenticeship standards (these should be regularly discussed in supervision)

- any concerns they may have – it is important that concerns are addressed as early as possible to ensure the apprentice is at the required level to pass through the EPA gateway at the end of year 2
- up-to-date knowledge of the apprentice's e-portfolio progress and the recording of off-the-job learning
- any workplace training opportunities that may occur in the period to the next review.

After the review, the line manager or mentor can submit any additional comments they would like recording to the Skills Coach.

Outside of reviews, apprentice mentors are expected to offer learning opportunities, make connections into other relevant departments, and discuss the apprentice's progress; this should be done with a minimum of monthly one-to-one supervision (or more frequently, depending on the apprentice's level of knowledge and experience). The apprentice template for supervision can be accessed [here](#).

Reviews are also designed to allow the university representative to have a better understanding of the environment in which the apprentice is operating and advise on ways in which learning can be embedded. They can also provide the Skills Coach/tutor with a better understanding of opportunities to stretch and challenge the apprentice, or factors that could unduly affect performance.

6. Contrasted learning experience (practice elements)

There is no requirement for a formal placement during this apprenticeship programme; however, employers must ensure that the apprentice has the opportunity to demonstrate, reinforce and apply their learning in at least two contrasting settings, and one setting must focus on statutory work.

In ASC it is envisaged that apprentices in their second academic year will have the opportunity to undertake 50 days' contrasting learning in one or more areas of the service; this may include time-shadowing in Children's Services and/or in GMMH. In addition to any shadowing days (no more than ten shadowing days should be undertaken), there will be an extended period in a different team and this will be assessed (further details below).

Any shadowing days will be a learning opportunity for the apprentice to gain an understanding of the way their team fits into the organisation, the work it carries out, and the legislation under which it operates.

Within this time, the apprentice would not be expected to undertake work on the team, but to shadow and learn about what the team does. In this way, the apprentice will develop a greater understanding of how their team's work fits into the wider social care offer, and in turn this will inform their practice and development as a social worker.

The apprentice should discuss with their mentor which team they would like to gain experience of and what they are aiming to learn from it; the mentor should then contact the relevant team to arrange. The learning should also be logged in the e-portfolio.

7. Formal assessment in practice

In order to progress to the EPA, which takes place across the final six months of the programme, the apprentice must pass through the EPA gateway. The EPA takes place around six months before the end of the apprenticeship.

To be able to pass through the EPA gateway, the apprentice's employer (in consultation with MMU) must decide whether the apprentice is ready for the EPA according to the following four criteria:

- they must have achieved a minimum level 2 in English and Maths as per the standard and general apprenticeship requirements. Note that it is the apprentice's responsibility to be proactive about achieving this. Please speak to MMU at the earliest opportunity in year 1 to find out about contacting the provider of the Maths/English support.
- they must be able to communicate at level 7 of the International English Language Testing System (with no element below 6.5)
- they must have obtained 300 academic credits of the Social Worker degree: 120 at level 4, 120 at level 5, and 60 at level 6, with a provisional grade
- they must have successfully completed assessed work experience in at least two contrasting settings, one of which is their substantive post, and of which at least one will have a focus on statutory work.

With regard to the final criterion above, ASC social work apprentices will be assessed in their substantive post for the first part of their apprenticeship. This will be done through the various methods outlined above, including a direct observation of practice. Apprentices will then be required to go to a different team (where statutory social work is undertaken if this is not the case in their substantive post), in order to undertake the second period of assessed work experience.

ASC have taken the decision that a period of 50 days (minus any shadowing days completed) will enable the apprentice to become familiar with the new setting and demonstrate their capability, evidencing some agreed aspects of the apprenticeship standards

during this time. These will be agreed at a [learning agreement](#) meeting at the start of this period of work experience and will vary depending on the knowledge, skills and behaviours the apprentice has been able to demonstrate up to this point. One [direct observation](#) of practice will be required during the 'placement'; this should be completed by the team manager/supervisor of the host team. At the end of the placement, the apprentice should complete a short piece of [reflective writing](#), detailing how the experience has added to their learning and how they might link this knowledge to their practice.

In order for the 50 days to be achieved by the EPA gateway, they need to be undertaken prior to the gateway, in year two of the degree.

8. Volume and complexity of workload

Although the apprentice may be a very experienced member of staff, once they start this course, they are a social work student and their workload should reflect this. They will only be present in their day job for 80% of the time (the other 20% comprising attendance at university or other off-the-job training) and should therefore have a reduced caseload, not exceeding 15 cases. It is good practice for the caseload weighting tool to be used periodically in supervision to ensure that the apprentice's caseload continues to 'weigh' an appropriate level.

In regard to the complexity of their work, apprentices should be supported to build up their knowledge of legislation and safeguarding procedures before being expected to undertake certain types of work independently, eg. safeguarding, mental capacity and best interest, continuing healthcare. These types of work would be more suitable for the later stages of their training in order to build on their experience once they have completed the law module. However, apprentices should still be closely supervised and supported by an experienced social worker to allow them time and space to reflect upon these experiences and develop their understanding.

9. End-point assessment

The EPA forms the final part of the integrated degree and comprises two strands, consisting of four distinct assessment methods:

Strand 1: Case study

This consists of a written critical case study; and an executive presentation to a panel consisting of representatives from MMU, ASC, a person with lived experience, and an independent 'lead'.

Strand 2: Scenario exercise

This consists of an initial analysis – a response to two further written data/questions, and a case record; it also includes an assessment discussion with a combination of representatives from MMU, ASC, a person with lived experience, and an independent 'lead'.

Full details of the EPA can be found here: [The end-point assessment](#)

Remediation process

If the apprentice is considered not ready for the EPA at the EPA gateway, they will be supported by their mentor and Skills Coach to develop the required skills, behaviours and experience, and will be assessed again at the next EPA gateway opportunity. This will be in a given timescale, and the apprentice will be expected to fully engage in the process. Please note that readiness for the gateway includes successful completion of level 2 Maths and English before the gateway. Without these qualifications, the apprentice will not be considered ready to pass through the gateway at that time.

10. Qualification

On successful completion of the EPA and ratification at the MMU exam board, the social work apprentice will be qualified and able to register with Social Work England. They will then move into a social work vacancy in ASC as soon as practicably possible.

Once they are in a permanent social worker post with ASC, the social worker will be expected to undertake Manchester City Council's Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme.

For any further information, please contact the Social Work Consultants

