

Programme and adjustments information

To better understand some Approach Social Work programme details and how to prepare, please read this short document with key information about layout, expectations and adjustments.

Suitability and reasonable adjustments

Frontline believes that applicants from all backgrounds bring strength and uniqueness to its programmes which benefit the children and families that we serve. We also recognise that individuals' experiences, needs and preferences do not exist in isolation and may extend beyond health and disability. We are committed to ensuring reasonable adjustments are made where safe and feasible to do so in order to enable equitable access to Approach Social Work.

However, there are some elements of the programme (such as those outlined in this document) that cannot be adjusted as they are integral to the programme or our duty of care to the children and families we support. Our suitability processes seek to ensure that participants will be able to safely and consistently meet the requirements and the demands inherent within Approach Social Work and social work practice more generally, and we strive to make this a reciprocal process.

As such the rest of this document is provided for the purpose of supporting candidates to prepare for the programme and consider any support or adjustments that may be required. Our role is to set candidates up for success, ensuring that Approach Social Work is the best route for them.

Programme layout

The readiness for practice is an intensive five-week period of academic study which involves a blended model, including daily online teaching and learning, as well as a three-day residential and in-person teaching days. Participants will learn about a range of themes relevant to safeguarding and supporting children and families. This includes attachment and trauma, domestic abuse, substance misuse, child sexual exploitation and anti-oppressive practice.

Following this, participants move into a full-time placement within their allocated local authority where they begin to apply their learning to their work with children and families. It is important to note that academic study and assessment continues alongside the practice learning element.

Context and pace

All local authority placements are within a statutory children's service, and are required to undertake work that involves high risk decision making and legal interventions for the protection of children and families. This includes home visits, assessments, leading multi-agency meetings, preparing reports, planning and delivering interventions within family homes and the wider community. Such activities are often required to be undertaken to tight deadlines and outside of core hours at times.

Practice learning duties can also involve considerable exposure to children and families with traumatic histories and ongoing experiences, as well as hostility and confrontation at times. Therefore, participants will need the capacity to work safely and effectively within highly emotive circumstances, facilitate difficult conversations with children and families and respond to challenging contexts.

The requirements of Approach Social Work are such that it requires full-time commitment as well as independent learning and completion of assignments during evenings and weekends. As a fast-track programme, participants are required to complete all 200+ days in practice, alongside the academic elements of their PGDip in Social Work, within the first year of the programme. This means that, although there is continued support both in placement and with the academic requirement, there is little opportunity to work at a slower pace. Unlike some other programmes, Approach Social Work cannot be completed part time or in conjunction with other courses or employment.

Remote and lone working

Social work is an essential role with most work undertaken in a face-to-face capacity within the community. Participants spend a considerable proportion of time completing paperwork in the local authority setting, and working with children and families within their homes and the wider community. It is mandatory for participants to be physically present within their allocated practice learning setting, especially during year one when new to the role and requiring supervision. As such, opportunities to work remotely will be limited or not available at all.

Participants will be expected to carry out some tasks independently (including lone working in the community) from early in their practice learning and more complex activities with increasing autonomy as their placement progresses.

Physical and cognitive demands

Reliable levels of mobility and concentration are also required to enable participants to meet the physical and cognitive demands associated with children's social work within statutory services. This includes:

- Frequently travelling to and accessing family homes (which may be within poorly lit areas or high-rise buildings), sometimes multiple times a day
- Regularly accessing upstairs areas within properties (e.g. children's bedrooms)
- Working with unpredictability (e.g. unplanned visits)
- Completing written reports or verbally communicating complex assessments

All stages of Approach Social Work also include heavy screen-time.

Summary

This information should provide you with a robust understanding of programme expectations, so you can start considering how to prepare for Approach Social Work. By reflecting on how the programme demands may impact you, it will allow our teams to better support you through the process and onto the programme, setting you up for success on your journey to becoming a qualified social worker.