

Best Interests Assessor (BIA)

Qualifying module

Application Pack 2026/27

Module Name: Best Interests Assessment

Module Code: UZVSBP-30-3 and UZVSBQ-30-M

Module Leader Name: Dr Rachel Hubbard



Introduction to the BIA module

This is the application pack for the UWE Bristol Best interests Assessor (BIA) qualifying module. This module teaches qualified and experienced health and social care professionals to meet the standard for BIA knowledge and skills set out in the Social Work England (SWE) [six capabilities for BIAs](#) (Appendix D).

Please read this document carefully and ensure you have all the relevant information and documentation ready before you start the application process. Please ensure you use the application form for the relevant academic year. Out of date application forms will not be approved.

Contents

Introduction to the BIA module	2
1. BIA module eligibility, structure and aims	3
2. BIA module teaching and assessment	4
3. 2026-27 BIA module dates.....	6
4. Applying for the BIA module.....	7
5. Guidance for sponsoring employers.....	8
6. Guidance for self-funding students	8
7. BIA module contacts	9
8. Appendix A: BIA module application flowchart.....	10
9. Appendix B: BIA module application form.....	11
10. Appendix C: Readiness to Study Statement expectations.....	15
11. Appendix D: Social Work England BIA 6 capabilities	16

1. BIA module eligibility, structure and aims

The role of the Bests Interests Assessor (BIA) is a specialist statutory role designed to protect vulnerable people's human rights in health and social care contexts. Therefore, only experienced, qualified and registered health and social care professionals are eligible to train for and undertake this role.

The [statutory regulations](#) state that only qualified social workers, occupational therapists, nurses and chartered psychologists with two or more years of post-qualifying experience, who are currently registered with the relevant professional regulator e.g. Social Work England, Social Care Wales, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council or a chartered psychologist as listed and certified by the British Psychological Society, can practice as BIAs.

Only those eligible to practice as BIAs as set out in the statutory regulations are eligible to apply for this Social Work England approved BIA qualifying module.

The BIA role is a challenging one that demands high levels of critical thinking, legal literacy and expertise in working with vulnerable people who are likely to have cognitive and communication needs. The module is designed to teach students to meet the requirements of the Social Work England 6 BIA capabilities (**Appendix D**) to ensure that students are ready for the demands of practice.

The UWE Bristol BIA qualifying module can be studied either at:

- Level 6 (final year of undergraduate degree level) **OR**
- Level 7 (Masters level)

The module is taught intensively online over a short period and is academically challenging. It is not possible to spend significant time building confidence in key areas, such as applying the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to practice and developing academic writing skills. We ask that supporting employers, such as local authorities and NHS trusts/health boards, employ robust selection processes to ensure that BIA candidates are ready for the challenges of this module and that self-funding students ensure that they have the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and access to the required observations of qualified practice before completing the UWE BIA module application process.

We ask that you provide evidence of relevant (e.g. relating to the application of mental capacity and human rights law) knowledge and skills (both practice and academic) as part of your application. This is to demonstrate that you are ready to undertake this programme of study as well as confirmation of your professional registration and qualification.

Candidates **must** be supported by a local authority supervisory body who is willing to offer at least two opportunities to observe qualified BIA practice. This commitment must be signed as agreed by the local authority DoLS lead/team providing the BIA observation opportunity when submitting the module application form.

This module is taught solely online via UWE Bristol online learning platforms, including Blackboard Ultra and Microsoft Teams, with live teaching and learning activities in large and small groups. Access to a non-employer electronic device with internet access can assist involvement in this learning.

Those completing the module successfully will be awarded 30 credits which can contribute towards postgraduate awards, such as the [Professional Development \(Social Work\) award](#). The BIA module is not an award in itself so students are not awarded a certificate but you will be provided with evidence of having completed the required credits to evidence your BIA qualification for practice.

Once qualified BIAs are eligible to practice for DoLS supervisory bodies, where they may be employed as a specialist assessor within a DoLS team, may work on a rota alongside another frontline practice or work for an agency commissioned by, or work independently directly for, a DoLS supervisor body. Qualified BIAs must complete annual CPD relevant to their role to maintain their qualification to practice in the role.

2. BIA module teaching and assessment

The module teaching takes place over 8 days, split into two blocks of four taught days. Each teaching block is followed by an assessment and successful completion of both will allow the student to qualify as a BIA.

Teaching on the two blocks may look like this:

Block 1: Law

- Day 1: Induction and revising knowledge of the Mental Capacity Act
- Day 2: Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Day 3: Rights and safeguards in DoLS
- Day 4: Intersections with other legal frameworks and law exam preparation
- Assessment task 1: 2 hour online law exam (40% of overall mark)

Block 2: Application to Practice

- Day 5: BIA assessment
- Day 6: BIA communication and consultation
- Day 7: Ethical and anti-oppressive BIA practice
- Day 8: BIA practice and assignment support
- Assessment task 2: 3000 word critically reflective assignment based on observed BIA practice (60% of overall mark)

BIA Module Learning Outcomes (MLO)

On successful completion of this module, students will be able to evidence they can meet the following learning outcomes, assessed by the task in brackets:

- **MLO 1:** Evaluate the statutory and professional requirements and challenges of applying the Mental Capacity Act 2005, as amended in 2009, other relevant legal

frameworks and case law to practice as a Best Interests Assessor (BIA). (Assessment tasks 1 and 2)

- **MLO 2:** Apply the theoretical and research evidence base for professional practice in the BIA role, including promoting the voice of the assessed person, acknowledging other professional perspectives and advocacy in contested decision making on risk in ethical practice. (Assessment task 2)
- **MLO 3:** Explore relevant interpersonal strategies for BIA practice, including engaging people with communication and capacity issues, and informing the assessed adult and other lay people of the nature of the BIA role and promoting the assessed person's rights in person-centred practice. (Assessment task 2)
- **MLO 4:** Identify how discrimination and oppression affects decision making with diverse people who may lack mental capacity and need restrictive care to keep themselves safe and explore strategies to ensure the principles of best interests and less restrictive decision making remain at the heart of BIA practice. (Assessment task 2)
- **MLO 5:** Explore the application of professional autonomy to develop evidence informed arguments in decision-making and recording, supporting the formation of an appropriately assertive BIA identity, at personal, professional and organisational levels. (Assessment task 2)

These module learning outcomes have been mapped to the 6 BIA capabilities (**Appendix D**) to ensure students successfully completing the module assessments will meet these Social Work England requirements.

3. 2026-27 BIA module dates

Teaching takes place online, mainly on Fridays, from 10am to 4pm via UWE Bristol Teams. In this academic year, the BIA module will run to the following schedule, so long as the minimum number of applications is received for each run.

Module application deadline

Please note that module application deadlines are **absolute**. No new applications for each module run will be considered after the application deadline and any incomplete applications at the deadline will be cancelled. If module enrolment numbers do not reach the minimum completed applications required (**12**) by the deadline, the module run will be cancelled. The maximum number of students on a module run is **25**.

September 2026 run
Application deadline
12 midday on Friday 11 th September 2026
Teaching and assessment dates
Block 1
<u>Teaching</u> Friday 25 th September, 2 nd , 9 th and 16 th October 2026 <u>Online exam</u> Tuesday 3 rd November 2026
Block 2
<u>Teaching</u> Friday 13 th , 20 th , 27 th November and 4 th December 2026 <u>Assignment deadline</u> Tue 5 th January 2027 at 2pm
Resits
- Online exam: Tuesday 13th April 2027 - Assignment: Wednesday 28th April 2027

March 2027 run
Application deadline
12 midday on Friday 19 th February 2027
Teaching and assessment dates
Block 1
<u>Teaching</u> Fri 5 th , Fri 12 th , Thu 18 th and Fri 19 th March 2027 <u>Online exam</u> Tuesday 13 th April 2027

Block 2
<u>Teaching</u> Friday 23rd and 30th April and 7th and 14th May 2027 <u>Assignment deadline</u> Tuesday 15th June 2027 at 2pm
Resits
• Online exam: Tuesday 7th September 2027 • Assignment: Tuesday 14th September 2027

4. Applying for the BIA module

Please see the BIA module application flowchart (**Appendix A**) for details of the process required to apply for the UWE BIA module. When applying, you must complete all relevant sections of the module application form (**Appendix B**) and submit this with all required supporting documentation.

Before applying

Ensure you have all relevant documents ready to upload:

- Completed Readiness to Study Statement to upload
 - See Readiness to Study Statement guidance (**Appendix C**) for more information
- Fully completed and signed application form,
- Evidence of professional qualification
- **SPONSORED STUDENTS:** name and contact at sponsoring agency
- **SELF-FUNDERS:** evidence of recent enhanced DBS check

Applying for the module

Go to the UWE BIA module webpage [here](#) and click on the Apply Now button. This page will ask you to choose between study at level 6 and 7.

What are Level 6 and 7 study?

This module can be studied at either:

- Level 6 (aka Level 3 or final year of undergraduate degree) or
- Level 7 (aka Masters level)

at no additional cost.

The teaching and assessment are the same for both levels but the expectation of academic ability at level 7 is higher, requiring more reading and critical analysis. The pass mark at Level 7 is higher (**50%** instead of **40%** at level 6). We recommend you choose

level 7 study **only** if you have been successful in your studies at this level before, are confident in your abilities, have time to focus on your studies and need academic credits at level 7 for wider post-graduate study.

You will then be able to select the module run you want to book for – runs in the 2026-27 academic year start in either:

- September 2026 or
- March 2027

Module fees

Fee details for this 30 credit assessed module are available [here](#). If the applicant is sponsored by their employer, the employer will need to complete a sponsorship form – please contact the [PD team](#) for details or if you have any issues with completion.

5. Guidance for sponsoring employers

UWE Bristol's BIA module works with stakeholder employers to provide robust and well-informed qualifying education for Best Interests Assessors (BIAs). To support employers the course team holds annual stakeholder meetings and regularly engages with employers to support development of the module. If you want to be added to a mailing list for these meetings, please contact the Module Leader.

Selection of applicants

We recommend sponsoring employers consider the information available in this application pack, including the Readiness to Study Statement expectations (**Appendix C**), when selecting staff to sponsor on the module.

Ongoing fitness to study and safeguarding

To ensure that any fitness to study or safeguarding issues regarding the student are given due attention, please ensure that any issue raised regarding the student is communicated to the Module Leader for follow-up under the relevant policy.

6. Guidance for self-funding students

Most students on the UWE Bristol BIA module are sponsored by their employer e.g. a local authority or NHS trust. However, some students choose to fund their own studies on the module.

If this applies to you please note that we expect self-funding students to have completed the below before applying for the module:

- Organised their own observations of BIA practice with DoLS supervisory bodies e.g. DoLS teams in local authorities in England or local authorities/health boards in Wales

- **Note:** supervisory bodies are under no obligation to provide access to BIA observations for self-funding students. Some may choose to do so and some may not. Those that do are likely to have their own expectations and requirements for those observing their BIAs. Since you are likely to be working for these supervisory bodies when qualified it is a good starting point to build relationships with these DoLS teams early on.
- Organise their own enhanced DBS checks to support their application

7. BIA module contacts

BIA module leader

This module is led by **Dr Rachel Hubbard** who is a social worker (registered with Social Work England), a qualified and experienced BIA and Senior Lecturer in Social Work at UWE, Bristol. She is co-author of *The Best Interests Assessor Practice Handbook* (second edition, 2022) with Dr Kevin Stone.

Email: rachel2.hubbard@uwe.ac.uk

Room: 2F10, Glenside

Phone: 0117 32 84027

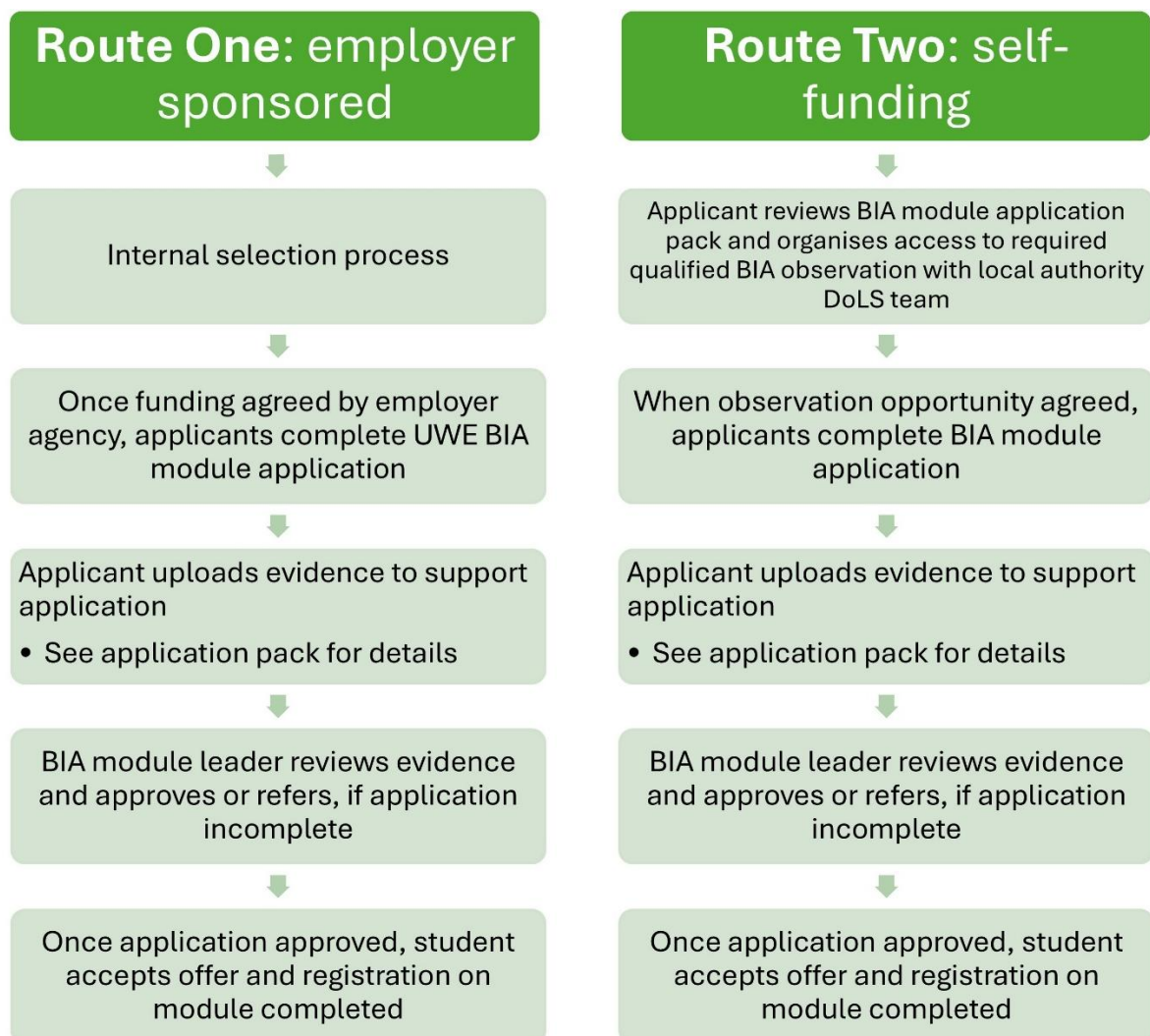
Professional Development (PD) team

The PD team can assist you with any issues regarding applying for the module, sponsorship forms, invoicing and other module administration.

Email: pd@uwe.ac.uk

Phone: 0117 3281158

8. Appendix A: BIA module application flowchart



9. Appendix B: BIA module application form

WORD VERSION OF THE 2026-27 APPLICATION FORM IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE [PD TEAM](#) OR [BIA MODULE LEADER](#).

All four sections of this form **must** be completed and signed by the applicant, the applicant's line manager, where relevant, and the local authority DoLS team supporting your access to BIA practice observations before submitting with your application for the BIA module.

Once you have completed this form, please upload it to your UWE BIA module with your:

- Evidence of your professional qualification (e.g. university certificate of social work, nursing, occupational therapy or psychology qualification)
- **AND** if you are self-funding on the module, evidence of recent enhanced DBS check

If you do not upload **all required documents**, you will not be approved to register on the UWE BIA module. Once your application has been submitted, it will be reviewed by the BIA module leader who may ask for additional evidence, if necessary.

Section 1	
Name of BIA module applicant	
Planned BIA module start date e.g. September or March and year of study	
Date of most recent Enhanced DBS check Please attach evidence of recent (within last three years) enhanced DBS check with your application if you are self-funding on the BIA module	
Number of most recent Enhanced DBS check If you have an existing DBS check via your sponsoring employer, you only need to provide your DBS check number here.	

Section 2

BIA applicant agreement

By signing below, you have agreed to:

- Being aware of the implications of your choice of level of study on this module.
- Making contact with UWE's Disability Service for support and advice, if needed.
- Your marks being shared with your sponsoring employer, where relevant.
- Confirm that you are not under investigation or suitability procedures with your professional regulator or the Disclosure and Barring Service and are not under investigation or have received any criminal conviction that have not been declared to your professional regulator.
- You are aware of your responsibility to notify the UWE Bristol module team, sponsoring employer and your observation provider agency, if any concerns are raised about your practice or fitness to study during the module teaching and assessment.
- Any areas of practice that give cause for concern may be shared with your sponsoring employer and your observation provider agency under relevant safeguarding and/or professional suitability processes.

Electronic signature e.g. photo of your signature, rather than typed text is preferred.

Signature of BIA module applicant	
Date	

Please complete **either Section 3A or 3B** below depending on whether you are:

A) Being sponsored by your employer to study on the BIA module **OR**

B) You are studying independently/self-funding

Section 3	
3A - BIA applicant manager's agreement	
If you are being supported by your employing agency to undertake this BIA qualifying module, please ask your line manager to sign below to evidence their agreement that you will be: - Released from your usual duties to attend teaching on this module - Supported with independent study, as agreed within your organisation, to enable you to complete learning activities within and outside of the taught days and complete the module assessment tasks Electronic signature e.g. photo of your signature is preferred.	
Signature of applicant line manager	
Applicant line manager role	
Applicant line manager organisation	
Date	

3B - Independent/self-funding applicant	
If you are not sponsored by an employer to complete this qualification and you are self-funding your place, please sign below. By signing this you have agreed that: - You are aware you are responsible for organising your own observations of BIA practice with a supervisory body (local authority DoLS team) - You are responsible for organising and evidencing your own Enhanced DBS check Electronic signature e.g. photo of your signature is preferred.	
Signature of self-funding BIA module applicant	

Section 4	
BIA observation agreement You must have the support of a local authority (or health board in Wales) DoLS supervisory body, whether you are sponsored by an employer to study to become a BIA or are studying independently, so that you can access at least two opportunities to observe qualified BIA practice. This is compulsory in order to complete the module assessments. Please ask a contact at your supporting local authority DoLS supervisory body to complete this form to confirm you will have access to these opportunities. Electronic signature e.g. photo of your signature is preferred.	
Name of supporting supervisory body	
Supporting applicant as: Delete as applicable	Sponsor e.g. funding student <u>and</u> observation OR Observation <u>only</u> e.g. self-funding student
Name of contact at supporting supervisory body	
Signature of contact at supporting supervisory body	
Date signed	

Once this document is completed and signed, please upload it with your BIA module application.

Contacts
If you need guidance on completing this form, please contact the BIA Module Leader: rachel2.hubbard@uwe.ac.uk If you need assistance with uploading this form or applying online, please contact the Professional Development team at: pd@uwe.ac.uk

10. Appendix C: Readiness to Study Statement expectations

Readiness to Study Statement expectations

Please describe in **500-600** words:

- Why you want to become a BIA
- Why you consider that you are ready to train to become a BIA
- Your confidence in applying relevant law to professional practice
- Your commitment to human rights based practice, in the context of managing risk

Please include reference to **relevant** practice experience, experience of applying mental capacity and human rights law in the context of risk and academic achievements to date.

You are not being asked to provide a generic CV. Please refer to the following RTS expectations and 6 BIA Capabilities (**Appendix D**) to assist you in writing your statement.

It is not expected that all applicants will include all of the below on their statement. They should reference some under each heading to evidence their understanding of the learning required on the BIA module and subsequent role they aim to qualify for, including examples of their practice experience and relevant previous study.

Why you want to become a BIA

Applicant recognises

- The BIA role is a development from their usual professional practice as a social worker, nurse, occupational therapist or psychologist
- The BIA role is not just a career step, but a specialist role focused on applying law for the benefit of people's human rights in the context of risk and complexity
- Their personal or professional experience of human rights work, possibly including deprivation of liberty and mental capacity practice
- If they have any experience of BIA practice, what interested them about the role

Why you consider that you are ready to train to become a BIA

Applicant reflects on their:

- Professional practice to date and how the BIA role is relevant
- Post-qualifying learning and their readiness to undertake study e.g. having time and support personally and professionally for study on the BIA module
- Academic achievements and ability to meet the demands of intensive study alongside everyday practice

Your confidence in applying relevant law to professional practice

Applicant reflects on their:

- Practice experience of mental capacity assessment and best interest decision-making and where relevant, Care Act assessment, S42 safeguarding enquiries, community

deprivation of liberty assessments or Mental Health Act practice e.g. as social worker completing social circumstances reports for tribunals or as an AMHP

- Experience of balancing risk assessment and decision-making in the context of vulnerability with recognition and application of individual human rights

Your commitment to human rights-based practice

Applicants reflect on their values in relation to promoting human rights in the context of care and treatment including:

- People's rights to have their voice heard in decisions, including use of advocacy
- Experience of balancing risk of harm with rights to autonomy and self-determination in practice with adults
- Promoting the essential involvement of people who might lack capacity and their family, friends/carers in assessment and decision-making, advocacy and opportunities to challenge and appeal decisions

11. Appendix D: Social Work England BIA 6 capabilities

Capabilities	Elements
1. The ability to apply in practice, and maintain knowledge of, relevant legal and policy frameworks	Knowledge
	1.1. A working knowledge of: (i) Mental capacity legislation and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), their related codes of practice, national and local policy guidance (ii) Relevant parts of other legislation, codes of practice, national and local policy guidance, in particular the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Health Acts (MHA) 1983 and 2007, the Care Act 2014, and law/policy related to adult safeguarding (iii) Relevant case law and its application in practice (iv) The developing concept of deprivation of liberty (v) The legal position and accountability of DoLS/BIA in relation to the MCA, any employing organisation and the authority on whose behalf they are acting
	Skills
	1.2. The ability to: (i) Base DoLS/BIA practice on a critical evaluation of a range of case law and research relevant to evidence-based practice (ii) Provide a clearly evidenced, written rationale of the process including where relevant information on differences of opinion, and how information has been analysed and used to reach an evidence-informed professional opinion (iii) Analyse and critically reflect on personal practice in order to identify achievements and opportunities for further development (iv) Exercise the appropriate use of independence, authority and autonomy and use it to inform their future practice as a BIA

	(v) Work within their area of competence, seeking further advice as appropriate (vi) Assert a social perspective of care and disability (vii) make properly informed independent decisions in tight timescales
2. The ability to work in a manner congruent with the assumption of capacity	Knowledge
	2.1. An understanding of: (i) The Human Rights Act in particular the basic rights to personal autonomy, choice, privacy, liberty and self-determination, providing challenge to others where needed (ii) The legal test that must be applied when assessing capacity (iii) Advance decisions and lasting powers of attorney including in relation to refusing life sustaining treatment (iv) The role of the relevant person's representative, and the role of the relevant person in choosing their representative
	Skills 2.2. The ability to: (i) Competently assess capacity for people in complex situations, seeking other evidence as appropriate (ii) consider and understand the appropriateness and function of different legislation depending on a person's situation and presenting need, and to give clear legal justifications for the outcome of assessments (iii) Understand and respond sensitively to, issues of race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment in carrying out DoLS assessments (iv) Consult sensitively all those with an interest in the person's welfare, and sustain engagement in circumstances where there is hostility or risk (v) Reflect on the influence and impact of their own values on professional practice (vi) Appropriately identify legally appointed decision makers such as attorneys and court appointed deputies, and assess whether advance decisions are valid and applicable (vii) The ability to promote the rights, dignity and self-determination of the relevant person consistent with their own needs and wishes, to enable them to contribute to the decisions made affecting their quality of life and liberty
3. The ability to take all practical steps to help someone make a decision	Knowledge
	3.1. An understanding of: (i) The impact of mental disorder on mental capacity, including the effect of social, physical and developmental factors, discrimination and inequality on a person's ability to make decisions (ii) The social impact of the disability or condition, how this impacts on the relevant person, the family, carers, and the decision-making process (iii) The role of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) within the DoLS process, and the circumstances in which an IMCA should be appointed

	(iv) A variety of forms of communication, including communication aids and tools and the impact on the relevant person of communicating at different times of the day and in different locations
	Skills
	3.2. The ability to: (i) Communicate skilfully and confidently in the context of a DoLS or mental capacity assessment (ii) Utilise a range of approaches to sustain engagement with people whose capacity and ability to communicate may fluctuate, or be very limited (iii) Enable the person to contribute to the decision making process as far as is possible given the circumstances of the case (iv) Support people through a complex assessment process within the framework of the MCA including interviewing the person, their relatives and staff and identifying and appointing the relevant person's representative
4. The ability to balance a person's right to autonomy and self-determination with their right to safety, and respond proportionately	Knowledge
	4.1. An understanding of: (i) the way that unwise decisions are understood in relation to the MCA (ii) The links between the MCA/DoLS, the MHA and the protection of adults at risk of abuse, balancing this within the wider need to recognise people's right to autonomy (iii) The impact of coercion and power imbalances on people's abilities to make decisions
	Skills 4.2. The ability to: (i) Carry out work with individuals that is person centred and promotes choice and autonomy, while considering issues of risks and proportionality (ii) Be alert for the need for assessment under the MHA where relevant persons are ineligible for DoLS (iii) Make appropriate safeguarding referrals and engage effectively and proactively with local safeguarding structures and processes
5. The ability to make informed, independent best interest decisions within the context of a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessment	Knowledge
	5.1. An understanding of: (i) What constitutes 'best interests', as set out within the MCA, codes of practice and case law (ii) The DoLS assessment process including the role of the Mental Health Assessor and IMCA (iii) The implications of a range of treatments and interventions applicable to the relevant person's situation (iv) The recommendations a BIA can make in relation to deprivation of liberty (v) how questions of public protection are to be considered from a DoLS perspective
	Skills
	5.2. The ability to:

	(i) Articulate the DoLS process and the BIA's role within the assessment process (ii) Determine whether: (a) a deprivation of liberty is occurring (b) the deprivation is in the person's best interests using the section 4 checklist (c) the person meets the requirements for age, no refusals, mental capacity and eligibility if appropriate (iii) Make appropriate recommendations on: (a) conditions attached to the authorisation, and (b) duration of the authorisation (iv) Formally record assessments to a high professional standard likely to withstand legal scrutiny, demonstrating the ability to analyse and evaluate complex information; to provide evidence for decision making including the rationale for the timescale recommended for any deprivation of liberty (v) Consult the Mental Health Assessor, and IMCA if appointed, and document and examine their views in the written decision-making process
6. The ability to effectively assess risk in complex situations, and use analysis to make proportionate decisions	Knowledge
	6.1. An understanding of: (i) Risk, how to assess risk, likelihood and seriousness of risk, proportionate responses to managing risk (ii) The benefits of positive risk taking (iii) the above in relation to risk to others as well as risk to self
	Skills 6.2. An ability to: (i) Weigh up the pros and cons of the different options in the light of best interests and risk assessment (ii) Identify risk, and consider its management in a less restrictive manner (if possible) to arrive at a proportionate outcome (iii) Evidence in their report an analysis of risk including proportionality and the actual likelihood of harm (iv) Take action when an application to the Court of Protection is needed (v) Challenge risk-averse, oppressive and/or discriminatory practice