

Best Interests Assessor (BIA)

Qualifying module

Application Pack 2025/26

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 B).

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 Out of date application forms will not be approved.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. 2025-26 BIA module dates	5
4. Applying for the BIA module	7
5. Guidance for self-funding students.....	8
6. BIA module application contacts.....	8
7. Appendix A: BIA module application form.....	9
8. Appendix B: 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 above 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 mental capacity and communication needs. The module is designed to teach students to meet the requirements of the Social Work England 6 BIA capabilities (Appendix B) 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)

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.

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 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.

2. BIA module teaching and assessment

The module teaching takes place over 6 days which are split into two blocks of three days teaching followed by an assessment, comprising:

Block 1: Law

- Day 1: Revising knowledge of the Mental Capacity Act
- Day 2: The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Day 3: Safeguards and intersections with other legal frameworks
- Assessment task 1: 2 hour online law exam (40% of overall mark)

Block 2: Application to Practice

- Day 4: Assessment and communication
- Day 5: Ethical and anti-oppressive practice
- Day 6: Decision-making and recording
- Assessment task 2: 3000 word critically reflective assignment based on observed BIA practice (60% of overall mark)

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 B) to ensure students successfully completing the module assessments will meet these Social Work England requirements.

3. 2025-26 BIA module dates

All teaching takes place online on Fridays from 10am to 4pm via UWE Bristol Teams. In the 2025-26 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**.

October 2025 run
Application deadline 12 midday on Friday 19 th September 2025
Teaching and assessment dates
Block 1 3 rd , 10 th and 17 th October 2025 <u>Online exam</u> 4 th November 2025
Block 2 28 th November and 5 th and 12 th December 2025 <u>Assignment deadline</u> Tue 6 th January 2026 at 2pm
<u>Assessment resits, if relevant</u> April 2026

March 2026 run
<p>Application deadline 12 midday on Friday 27th February 2026</p>
Teaching and assessment dates
<p>Block 1 13th, 20th and 27th March 2026</p> <p><u>Online exam</u> 21st April 2026</p>
<p>Block 2 8th, 15th and 22nd May 2026</p> <p><u>Assignment deadline</u> Tue 16th June 2026 at 2pm</p>
<p>Assessment resits, if relevant September 2026</p>

4. Applying for the BIA module

To apply for the UWE Bristol BIA module, you must complete all relevant sections of the module application form in Appendix A and submit this with all required supporting documentation to your module application.

Before applying

- Ensure you have all relevant documents ready
 - Professional qualification,
 - Evidence of enhanced DBS, if you are self-funding **AND**
 - Fully completed and signed application form)
- Confirm your chosen level of study (Level 6 or 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 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.

Applying for the module

Apply for the module using the link below for the relevant module run and level of study,

October 2025

- [Level 6](#)
- [Level 7](#)

March 2026

- [Level 6](#)
- [Level 7](#)

Module fees

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

5. 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:

- Organise their own observations of BIA practice with DoLS supervisory bodies e.g. 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 BIA staff.
- Organise their own Enhanced DBS checks to support their application

6. BIA module application 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 team (admin)

Email: pd@uwe.ac.uk

Phone: 0117 3281158

7. Appendix A: BIA module application form

WORD VERSION OF THE 2025-26 APPLICATION FORM IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE [PD TEAM](#) OR [BIA MODULE LEADER](#).

All five 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 with:

- Evidence of your professional qualification (e.g. university certificate of social work, nursing, occupational therapy or psychology qualification)
- Evidence of your Enhanced DBS check, if you are self-funding

To the UWE CPD Portal as part of your module application.

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. October or March and year of study	
Highest level of academic study to date	
Most recent academic study	
Profession	Social worker / nurse / occupational therapist / chartered psychologist (delete as applicable)
Year qualified Please upload evidence of your qualification with this completed form	
Qualifying awarding body e.g. university	

<p>Professional regulatory body e.g. Social Work England, Social Care Wales, Health and Care Professions Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council or chartered psychologist list of British Psychological Society</p>	
<p>Applicant professional body registration number</p>	
<p>Date of most recent Enhanced DBS check Please attach evidence with your application if you are self-funding on this module</p>	
<p>Number of most recent Enhanced DBS check</p>	

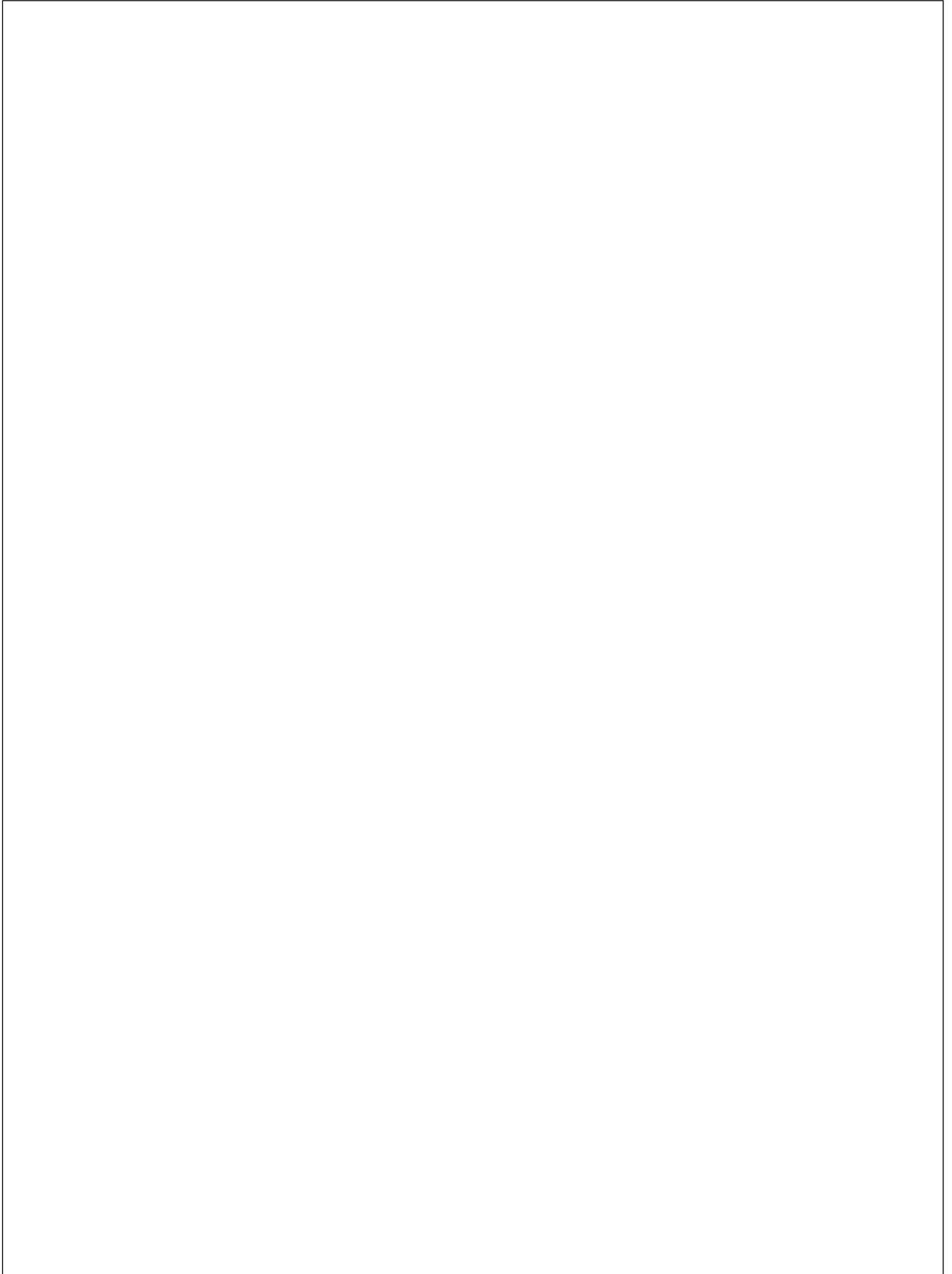
Section 2

Readiness to study

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

Please include reference to **relevant** practice experience, experience of applying mental capacity and human rights law, and academic achievements to date. You are not being asked to provide a generic CV. You may refer to the 6 BIA Capabilities (Appendix B) in your personal statement to evidence your existing relevant experience and identify where there are gaps in your knowledge.



Section 3	
Level of study	
<p>This module can be studied at either level 6 (aka final year of undergraduate degree) or 7 (aka Masters) 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 is higher at Level 7 (50% instead of 40% at level 6).</p> <p>We recommend you only choose level 7 study if you have been successful in your studies at this level before, are confident in your abilities, have time for study and need academic credits at this level for wider post-graduate study. Once you have started the module teaching there is a limited time period in which you can change your level of study. We have a significant minority of students who have not passed the module at level 7 where they could have at level 6, which has implications for both you and those funding your study.</p>	
Indicate your chosen level of study	Level 6 / Level 7 (delete as applicable)

Section 4	
BIA applicant agreement	
<p>By signing below, you have agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 if any concerns are raised during your course of study. • Any areas of practice that give cause for concern may be shared with your sponsoring employer and the local authority supervisory body providing your BIA observations under relevant safeguarding and/or professional suitability processes. • You are aware of the implications of the choice of level of study on this BIA module. <p>Electronic signature e.g. photo of your signature is preferred.</p>	
Signature of BIA module applicant	
Date	

Please complete **either A or B** 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

A) 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	

B) 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	
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Section 5

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 to the UWE Bristol portal with your:

- Evidence of your professional qualification
- Evidence of most recent Enhanced DBS check

If further documentation or clarification is required, we will be in touch.

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

8. Appendix B: BIA 6 capabilities

Capabilities	Elements
<p>1. The ability to apply in practice, and maintain knowledge of, relevant legal and policy frameworks</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>1.1. A working knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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
	<p>Skills</p> <p>1.2. The ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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
<p>2. The ability to work in a manner congruent with the assumption of capacity</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>2.1. An understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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

	<p>(iv) The role of the relevant person’s representative, and the role of the relevant person in choosing their representative</p>
	<p>Skills</p> <p>2.2. The ability to:</p> <p>(i) Competently assess capacity for people in complex situations, seeking other evidence as appropriate</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(iv) Consult sensitively all those with an interest in the person’s welfare, and sustain engagement in circumstances where there is hostility or risk</p> <p>(v) Reflect on the influence and impact of their own values on professional practice</p> <p>(vi) Appropriately identify legally appointed decision makers such as attorneys and court appointed deputies, and assess whether advance decisions are valid and applicable</p> <p>(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</p>
<p>3. The ability to take all practical steps to help someone make a decision</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>3.1. An understanding of:</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(ii) The social impact of the disability or condition, how this impacts on the relevant person, the family, carers, and the decision-making process</p> <p>(iii) The role of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) within the DoLS process, and the circumstances in which an IMCA should be appointed</p> <p>(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</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>3.2. The ability to:</p> <p>(i) Communicate skilfully and confidently in the context of a DoLS or mental capacity assessment</p>

	<p>(ii) Utilise a range of approaches to sustain engagement with people whose capacity and ability to communicate may fluctuate, or be very limited</p> <p>(iii) Enable the person to contribute to the decision making process as far as is possible given the circumstances of the case</p> <p>(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</p>
<p>4. The ability to balance a person's right to autonomy and self-determination with their right to safety, and respond proportionately</p>	<p>Knowledge</p>
	<p>4.1. An understanding of:</p> <p>(i) the way that unwise decisions are understood in relation to the MCA</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(iii) The impact of coercion and power imbalances on people's abilities to make decisions</p>
	<p>Skills</p> <p>4.2. The ability to:</p> <p>(i) Carry out work with individuals that is person centred and promotes choice and autonomy, while considering issues of risks and proportionality</p> <p>(ii) Be alert for the need for assessment under the MHA where relevant persons are ineligible for DoLS</p> <p>(iii) Make appropriate safeguarding referrals and engage effectively and proactively with local safeguarding structures and processes</p>
<p>5. The ability to make informed, independent best interest decisions within the context of a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessment</p>	<p>Knowledge</p>
	<p>5.1. An understanding of:</p> <p>(i) What constitutes 'best interests', as set out within the MCA, codes of practice and case law</p> <p>(ii) The DoLS assessment process including the role of the Mental Health Assessor and IMCA</p> <p>(iii) The implications of a range of treatments and interventions applicable to the relevant person's situation</p> <p>(iv) The recommendations a BIA can make in relation to deprivation of liberty</p> <p>(v) how questions of public protection are to be considered from a DoLS perspective</p>
	<p>Skills</p> <p>5.2. The ability to:</p> <p>(i) Articulate the DoLS process and the BIA's role within the assessment process</p> <p>(ii) Determine whether:</p> <p>(a) a deprivation of liberty is occurring</p>

	<p>(b) the deprivation is in the person’s best interests using the section 4 checklist</p> <p>(c) the person meets the requirements for age, no refusals, mental capacity and eligibility if appropriate</p> <p>(iii) Make appropriate recommendations on:</p> <p>(a) conditions attached to the authorisation, and (b) duration of the authorisation</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(v) Consult the Mental Health Assessor, and IMCA if appointed, and document and examine their views in the written decision-making process</p>
<p>6. The ability to effectively assess risk in complex situations, and use analysis to make proportionate decisions</p>	<p>Knowledge</p>
	<p>6.1. An understanding of:</p> <p>(i) Risk, how to assess risk, likelihood and seriousness of risk, proportionate responses to managing risk</p> <p>(ii) The benefits of positive risk taking</p> <p>(iii) the above in relation to risk to others as well as risk to self</p>
	<p>Skills</p>
<p>6.2. An ability to:</p> <p>(i) Weigh up the pros and cons of the different options in the light of best interests and risk assessment</p> <p>(ii) Identify risk, and consider its management in a less restrictive manner (if possible) to arrive at a proportionate outcome</p> <p>(iii) Evidence in their report an analysis of risk including proportionality and the actual likelihood of harm</p> <p>(iv) Take action when an application to the Court of Protection is needed</p> <p>(v) Challenge risk-averse, oppressive and/or discriminatory practice</p>	