

Social Work Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE) Policy

Background to the development of the ASYE

- The ASYE has its origins in the recommendations of Lord Laming's Report following the murder of Victoria Climbié and the review of his recommendations and their implementation by Local Authorities following the death of baby Peter Connelly
- As a result of Lord Laming's second report the Social Work Task Force was established in 2009 with a remit of undertaking a comprehensive review of frontline Social Work practice and to make recommendations for improvement and reform of the whole profession. One of its recommendations was the '*Creation of an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment as the final stage in becoming a Social Worker*'. The first ASYE Programme was commenced in Sept 2012.
- The ASYE Programme now forms an essential element of the Social Work Reform Agenda, which is seeking to develop 'a national system of social work expertise upon which the public can rely'

The Aims of the ASYE Programme

- The ASYE Programme has 3 broad aims:
 1. to ensure consistency of support for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) in the first year of employment
 2. so that they develop critically reflective practice and become more confident and more capable professionals,
 3. which is underpinned by a robust assessment process designed to assure standards
- The expectation is that the knowledge and skills gained through the NQSW's qualifying programme is consolidated in the first year and that specialist knowledge and skills are developed in relation to their employment setting and service user group

The essence of the Programme

- The Programme is designed to support a NQSW transform the practice knowledge (acquired in qualifying) into a level of practice expertise that will enable sound professional decision-making and effective interventions.
- The key process through which this happens is the facilitation of critical reflection and analysis that informs and provides a rationale for sound professional decision-making.

- The Programme is designed to facilitate this process through 4 specific support structures.

The 4 Support structures

1. **Assessor:** a qualified, registered Social Worker, experienced in practice who is either at Practice Educator (PE) Stage 2 or working towards PE Stage 2.
 2. **Supervision:** at the frequency and duration required by the Programme with a focus on critical reflection
 - Frequency:
 - weeks 1-6: weekly
 - week 7 – 6 months: fortnightly
 - 6 – 12 months: monthly
 - The national guidance recommends that weekly supervision is made available to all NQSWs at the start of the ASYE regardless of the length of time they have been in their job role
 - Duration: at least 1 ½ hours
 - Focus: critical reflection
 3. **Reduced workload:** the equivalent up to 90% of what is expected of a confident Social Worker in the same role in their second or third year, weighted over the course of the year by things such as case complexity, risk and growing proficiency
 4. **Protected development time:** to meet the NQSW's training and development needs equivalent to 10% of their working time over the course of the ASYE. This equates to 2 days pcm where the NQSW is employed full-time. If working part-time, it is calculated on a pro rata basis
- To support progressive development, Assessors/ Supervisors must manage the NQSWs' workload and ensure that they make effective use of the protected development time, enabling them to cope with increasing complexity.
 - If a NQSW or their Assessor has any concerns about the working of the Programme's support structures for supporting the NQSW's progressive development then they must implement the Protocol for raising concerns about the support elements of the Programme (see Appendix 1)

A mandatory Programme

- It is mandatory for NQSWs employed by the County Council to participate in and work to complete the Programme. This requirement will be incorporated as an essential criteria in the relevant Job Profile. Failure to complete the Programme

will lead to the involvement of the Senior Manager of Human Resources for the relevant Directorate.

- The Programme is mandatory for NQSWs working part-time and, in Health and Care Services, for Bank Workers provided they are attached to a Team and their temporary contract is for longer than 3 months, with the expectation that it will run to 6 months or more; this position is subject to review and change.

Eligibility for the ASYE Programme

- NQSWs employed by Cumbria County Council are eligible to be registered on to the Programme with the respective overseeing body provided that:
 - they are **registered with the HCPC**
 - they are registered for the ASYE Programme **within two years** of successfully completing a recognised Social Work degree programme.
 - a NQSW who has, for whatever reason, not taken up a Social Work or equivalent role more than two years after qualification will need to satisfy their employer that they have maintained their social work skills and knowledge in other ways.
 - they are employed in roles that:
 - contribute to the **delivery of statutory health and well-being outcomes** for people in need of care and support and
 - are of a **sufficient breadth and complexity** that will enable them to demonstrate their capability against the Knowledge and Skills Statement and the PCF capabilities.
- A NQSW falling outside the two year eligibility period is required to demonstrate to Cumbria County Council that they have maintained the currency of their social work knowledge and skills since qualifying. Generally, this can be done by employment in a social care or other related role and complementing this by reading, reflecting and taking advantage of opportunities for CPD.
- If a NQSW is unsure whether they meet the eligibility criteria and would like to explore this further then they should contact the ASYE Lead

NQSWs previously employed in Scotland

- Whether a NQSW previously employed by a social care employer in Scotland is to be offered participation in the ASYE Programme is a decision for Cumbria County Council

- A principal consideration in determining this question is whether your current practice capabilities are at the ASYE level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The assessment here will not be just about the learning activities you have undertaken whilst employed in Scotland but a measurement of the outcomes from this. We would also consider whether you meet the eligibility conditions for the Programme

Is the Programme open to Agency Workers?

- The Programme is not accessible to agency staff working with Cumbria County Council.
- However, with the approval of the relevant line manager, the Agency worker is able to register for any training event organised specifically for NQSWs. The details of these events will be confirmed by the ASYE Programme Lead

Timescales for completing ASYE

- For full-time employees it will take 12 months to complete the ASYE. For part-time employees the duration of the ASYE Programme would be calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- If the NQSW is employed on a part-time contract then the timescale will take account of their normal pattern of work and adjusted on a pro-rata basis.
- It is not permissible for an experienced NQSW to complete their ASYE in less than 12 months. The NQSW needs to demonstrate progressive development over this period of time.

Can the ASYE be extended?

- There are only exceptional circumstances in which the year can be extended, typically:
 - Sickness
 - Maternity leave
 - Leave of absence
 - Where the appropriate level of support has not been made available
- Where the appropriate level of support has not been made available:
 - the ASYE process should be suspended for a prescribed limited time to allow the support arrangements to be put in place.

- the suspension, the reason why and the action plan should be recorded by the Assessor in the relevant Review section of the Record of Support and Progressive Assessment (RSPA).
- The ASYE cannot be extended for capability reasons.
- Where the NQSW or their Assessor has not responded to requests from the ASYE Lead for information the ASYE Lead will consider suspending the ASYE to provide the NQSW with the opportunity to produce evidence to confirm that they have meet the Programme requirements

Induction

- The County Council Induction Policy sets out the induction responsibilities and requirements for a new employee.
- Within two weeks of the start of the Induction period:
 - the NQSW's Line Manager should identify an experienced Social Worker to be the ASYE Assessor for the NQSW
 - the NQSW is to contact the ASYE Lead to co-ordinate an initial meeting between themselves, their Assessor and the ASYE Lead
 - the ASYE Lead will provide initial information about the Programme, including details of resources to access within the Induction period

Registration on to the ASYE Programme

- A NQSW is unable to participate in the ASYE Programme unless they are registered with the overseeing body: the Department of Education for Children's Services; and, Skills for Care for Health and Care Services
- It is the responsibility of the ASYE Lead to register a NQSW onto the ASYE Programme when they receive all the documentation required for this purpose from the NQSW.
- The NQSW should complete the necessary tasks for registration within 6 weeks of the start of their employment. Their Line Manager is to provide capacity for completing these tasks when managing the NQSW's workload.
- The NQSW's Assessor and the ASYE Lead will support the NQSW in the process of achieving registration on to the Programme.

The Assessment Framework

- The minimum level of practice capability against which a NQSW is assessed is set out in the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) and the PCF at ASYE level.
 - In Children Services' the KSS is the primary assessment framework and so must be the Assessor's and NQSW's main focus in considering the ASYE standard to meet at the end of the year. The PCF remains relevant and applicable.
 - In Health and Care Services the KSS and the PCF have equal value
- The KSS and PCF are mapped against each other in the Holistic Assessment Outcomes (HAOs). The HAOs emphasise progressive development and are outcomes focused. They are to be used by the Assessor as a guide to the key outcomes in the ASYE
- Whatever a NQSW's level of capability at the start of the year: the NQSW needs to be able to demonstrate professional development and progression to these minimum standards,
- Where the NQSW is demonstrating a level of capability beyond the ASYE level: then reference should be made to the other levels of the PCF eg Social Work level.
- It is the responsibility of the Assessor to decide whether at the end of the year the NQSW has consistently demonstrated the level of practice capability set out in the KSS and PCF.

The Assessor

- The assessment of a NQSW should be undertaken by a qualified, registered and experienced Social Worker.
- The ASYE Assessor will in the first instance be the Social Work Academy Manager. In the transition period to a comprehensive Academy approach, an Assessor should be an Advanced Practitioner/ Enhanced Practitioner who is trained to Practice Educator Stage 2 or working towards Stage 2.
- In some cases this may not be possible. Before any arrangement is made for a Social Worker other than an Advanced Practitioner/ Enhanced Practitioner to undertake the Assessor role:
 - the NQSW's line manager should consult with the ASYE Lead.
 - Where it is agreed with the ASYE Lead that the Assessor is not to be an Enhanced Practitioner, then it would be a requirement of the Social Worker undertaking the Assessor role that they will be an experienced social worker and be a Practice Educator at Practice Educator Stage 2 or will work towards it during their period as an ASYE Assessor.

- Where a NQSW has a non-Social Work qualified Line Manager, Cumbria County Council will make arrangements for the assessment to be carried out by a suitably qualified, registered and experienced Social Worker.

Evidencing the minimum level of practice capability

- The minimum level of practice capability required by the Programme is evidenced through the submission of a portfolio at the end of the ASYE year.
- The portfolio submission will comprise 6 parts:
 1. Confidentiality Statement
 2. Critical Reflection Log
 3. Record of Support and Progressive Assessment
 4. Supervision Date Log
 5. An Assessment of recording capabilities
 6. Feedback from people in need of care and support
- The templates (except for the feedback) and supporting guidance for their completion will be provided by the ASYE Lead.

Review of progress and summative judgments

- The ASYE Programme is divided in to 3 monthly review periods
- At each review period the NQSW provides the Assessor with the required evidence of progression over that period.
- Within the review process it is the responsibility of the Assessor to undertake an audit the evidence against the KSS and PCF, make an assessment of progress and form a summative judgment on whether the NQSW is 'on track' to meet the required outcomes by the end of the ASYE. At the final review the Assessor will make a final summative judgement on the NQSW's level of practice capability.
- If at a Review the Assessor considers that the NQSW is not on track to reach the required standard and has received the required Programme support arrangements, then the Assessor should consider with their line manager whether to commence informal or formal capability procedures under the Capability Policy. The objective is to support the NQSW reach the required standard and the Assessor and NQSW must develop an Action Plan to support the NQSW, which should be:
 - specific about the practice that is expected
 - specific about the time-frame within which development is expected
 - specific about when it will be reviewed
 - clear about the learning opportunities that will be available

- Any employment issues that arise during the ASYE will be managed separately through performance management procedures and, if appropriate, capability proceedings. Where an Assessor makes a referral to their Directorate's Human Resources Advisor they will also inform the ASYE Lead of this step. Capability proceedings run alongside the ASYE Year.

Assessor recommendation and the Internal Panel decision-making process

- At the end of the ASYE, the Assessor makes a professional recommendation about whether or not the NQSW has passed their ASYE. This recommendation is scrutinised through an internal moderation process before it is confirmed or not. The procedure governing the Panel process is set out in Appendix 2.
- Internal moderation combines three distinct activities:
 1. To scrutinise the evidence for the recommendation against the criteria of accuracy, validity, sufficiency and robustness
 2. To scrutinise the support arrangements received by the NQSW
 3. To make a decision and take action where there are concerns
- The Panel may make one of the following decisions:
 - To confirm the Assessor's recommendation to pass or to fail the NQSW in their ASYE
 - To adjourn for more evidence and/ or the completion of documentation to the standard required. The Panel Chair may in certain circumstances invite a senior manager to be involved in the decision-making process
- If the Panel does not agree with the Assessor's recommendation or deem that there is not sufficient evidence to support the Assessor's decision, agreed action should be taken within a given timescale. This action may take the form of:
 - a request for more evidence.
 - a reassessment with a view to bringing the assessment up to the expected standard
 - a request that a second Assessor reassesses the evidence and makes an assessment decision on behalf of the organisation
- Each of these decisions will involve an adjournment of the Panel decision and a timescale will be set for the re-submission
- In relation to the Assessor, the scrutiny of the assessment decision may indicate a learning and development need. In these circumstances, agreed action to support the Assessor's development should be planned and enabled.
- Where the Internal Panel decides to recommend that the NQSW fails the ASYE Year, it will trigger capability proceedings. Additionally, and depending on the

reason/s for the fail recommendation, the employer will decide whether to make a referral to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

- An ASYE Cumbria Partnership External Panel will select and scrutinise a specific proportion of the Internal Panel decisions and provide feedback to Cumbria County Council on these decisions and on the provision of the support arrangements to NQSWs

Failure to complete the Programme

- If the NQSW decides not to complete the Programme, their Line Manager will refer the matter to the Directorate's Senior Human Resources Manager to decide the contractual implications that will result and inform the ASYE Programme Development Lead.
- Where the Internal Assessment and Moderation Panel decide to recommend that the NQSW fails the ASYE Year, it will trigger capability proceedings. Additionally, and depending on the reason/s for the fail recommendation, the employer will decide whether to make a referral to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Oversight and development of the ASYE Programme

- Oversight of the Programme will be undertaken by an ASYE Steering Group. The other purposes of the Group will be to support the development of the ASYE Programme, identifying priorities for improving the Programme and supporting the Quality Assurance of the Programme.

Administrative functions supporting the Programme

- The ASYE Lead has responsibility for the administrative functions relating to the Programme, including: applying for registration as an ASYE Programme Provider with the Department of Education (DfE) and Skills for Care (SfC); providing information to the DfE and SfC for audit and other purposes; maintaining the details of NQSWs' progress through the ASYE Year; and writing the supporting guidance for the Programme.