

Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Policy

Children's Services

Introduction

This policy sets out the conditions for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) with Coventry City Council Children's Services for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW). This policy should be read in conjunction with Coventry City Council's (CCC) ASYE Guidance, The Record of Support and Progressive Assessment (RoSPA) template, and the Critical Reflection Log template.

Whilst this policy, and the ASYE Guidance, identifies procedures for assessing NQSWs on the ASYE, including those conditions in which unsatisfactory progress would, ultimately, lead to dismissal (in line with CCC's Employment Policy), it should be understood that the ASYE has been introduced in Coventry to provide an excellent and comprehensive beginning to a NQSW's career. Coventry Children's Services offer NQSWs considerable support and development throughout the ASYE, both during their first six months within the Social Work Academy, and for the remainder of the ASYE, within a team in Children's Services, to help develop the individual's practice and drive continued improvement across the service.

Background to the development of the ASYE (National Context)

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 recommendation 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 September 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'.

Aims of the ASYE Programme

The ASYE Programme aims to ensure consistency of support for NQSWs in their first year of employment. The ASYE Programme should develop critically reflective practice, supporting NQSWs to become more confident and more capable professionals.

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 Social Work Academy

In Coventry Children's Services, all NQSWs start their Social Work career undertaking six months within the Social Work Academy, and as such will complete the first six months of their ASYE within this context.

The Social Work Academy is an operational team, which provides high levels of support to NQSWs, as well as high challenge, and high expectations. Following the successful completion of six months within the Social Work Academy, NQSWs complete the remaining six months of the ASYE, within one of the teams across Coventry Children's Services.

Support during the ASYE

Assessor: In Coventry, the NQSW's assessor for their first six months in practice will be their Team Manager in the Social Work Academy. At the six months stage there will be a handover of assessor responsibility to the Team Manager of the team in which the NQSW is transitioning into.

Supervision: NQSW's will receive critically reflective supervision throughout their ASYE. The frequency of this supervision is as follows:

- Weeks 1 – 6: Weekly
- Week 7 – 6 months: Fortnightly
- 6 – 12 months: Monthly

The duration of these supervisions is a minimum of 1 ½ hours. During the first six months of the ASYE, while in the Social Work Academy, NQSWs will receive both individual and group supervision.

Reduced Workload: During their ASYE, NQSWs should have caseloads which equate 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.

During the first six months in the Social Work Academy, NQSWs should have at any one time, a maximum of ten children that they are working with, either in a case holding

responsibility, or completing a specific piece of work on another Social Workers caseload, as part of the plan for the child.

When NQSWs transition out of the Social Work Academy, their caseload should increase incrementally, when the NQSW is assessed as ready, and should not exceed 90% of what is expected of a confident Social Worker in the same role in their second or third year, weighted by things such as case complexity, risk, and growing proficiency.

NQSWs should not hold case responsibility for Child Protection cases, Pre-Proceedings or Care Proceedings during their ASYE. NQSWs can however, co-work these cases if considered appropriate, or complete pieces of work for these cases, under the support and supervision of their line manager and an experienced child and families social worker. NQSWs should be given the opportunity to build knowledge and skills in this area by shadowing experienced colleagues, observing at child protection conferences or Court and contributing to related tasks where a child is subject to a child protection plan.

Protected Development Time: To meet the NQSWs learning and development needs, 10% of their working time should be protected as development time. This equates to two days per month when the NQSW is employed full-time. The Support and Assessment Agreement sets out the type of activity that protected time should be used for.

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 build their knowledge and understanding as well as manage with an increasing complexity of work.

During the first six months of the ASYE, the protected development time is built into the Social Work Academy offer. The requirement for protected time continues for the remaining six months and arrangements for managing this should be agreed at the handover meeting (the NQSW's six month review meeting).

Study Days: In addition to the protected development time, NQSWs should have four study days, in order to complete work for their ASYE portfolio as outlined in the Support and Assessment Agreement. More guidance on this can be found within the ASYE Guidance.

Mandatory Programme

It is mandatory for all NQSWs employed by Coventry City Council to participate in and complete the work required for the ASYE Programme. Failure to complete the programme will lead to this being escalated to the Principal Social Worker and Operational Lead.

Eligibility for the ASYE Programme

All NQSWs employed by Coventry Children's Services will be registered on the ASYE programme. The eligibility for the ASYE Programme is:

- All Coventry social workers are required to have current registration with the Regulatory body for social work (currently HCPC) and are required to abide by the standards required by the Regulatory body. Ideally your HCPC registration should be in place when you join the Social Work Academy, but if this is not the case it must be obtained within two months of commencing with Coventry Childrens Services. You cannot undertake social work tasks until you are HCPC registered so any delay will impact on your ASYE progress and development as a social worker.
- That the NQSW is registered for the ASYE Programme within two years of successfully completing a recognised Social Work Degree programme.
- Any 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 Coventry Children's Services that they have maintained their social work skills and knowledge in other ways.

Timescales for completing the ASYE

The ASYE programme is a full-time programme and takes twelve months to complete. It is not permissible for any NQSW to complete their ASYE in less than twelve months. It is an expectation that all NQSWs will complete that ASYE Programme in the twelve months period. If an NQSW does not work full-time, then the length of time given to complete the programme will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. The details and plan for this will be agreed and recorded in the Support and Assessment Agreement and will take account of the NQSWs individual circumstances.

Can the ASYE be extended?

It is an expectation that all NQSWs complete the ASYE in twelve months. There are only exceptional circumstances in which the ASYE can be extended. These are typically:

- Sickness
- Maternity/ Paternity 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 support arrangements to be put in place. This suspension, and the reason why, and the action plan, should be recorded by the Assessor in the relevant section of the RoSPA.

Registration on to the ASYE Programme

- An 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.

- It is the responsibility of the ASYE Co-Ordinator 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 two months of the start of their employment. Three months is the maximum timeframe and should only be met in exceptional circumstances. It is the responsibility of the NQSW to ensure that they are registered with the regulatory body (currently the HCPC) as soon as they are advised that their qualifying course has notified the regulatory body that they have passed their qualifying course.
- The ASYE Co-Ordinator will support the NQSW in the process of registering onto the ASYE 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 Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) at ASYE level.
- 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 by the Assessor to other levels of the PCF (e.g. 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 social work qualified, registered Team Manager. During the first six months of the ASYE the assessor will be the Team Manager within the Social Work Academy. From six months until the completion of the ASYE, the assessor will be the Team Manager in the receiving team.

- Other qualified and registered experienced Social Workers can contribute to the assessment of the NQSW (i.e. through the completion of direct observations). Any social workers completing such tasks would normally be at an Advanced Social Worker or Senior Practitioner level, and should hold a Practice Education qualification, or be working towards this. In any instance, the assessor must complete at least one of the direct observations of practice and is responsible for completing the reports of the NQSW's progress and performance at the three month, six month and final report stage. The three month and six month reports will be completed by the Team Manager in the Social Work Academy, and the final report will be completed by the receiving Team Manager.

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 consists of the completed RoSPA and Critical Reflection Log. The ASYE document guidance sets out what is required of the NQSW and Assessor, including a checklist of evidence to be included and suggested activity to meet the assessment framework of the KSS and PCF.
- All completed portfolios (both the RoSPA and CRL), will be reviewed by the Internal Moderation Panel, chaired by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker, for quality assurance purposes. The panel will review and confirm that there is sufficient evidence to support the assessment recommendation.

Review of progress and summative judgements

- The ASYE Programme is divided into 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 of the evidence against the KSS and PCF, make an assessment of the progress and form a summative judgement 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 whether to commence informal or formal capability procedures. The objective is to support the NQSW to reach the required standard and the Assessor and NQSW must develop and Action Plan 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
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- If there are concerns in respect of a NQSW's capability when they are in their probation period of employment, consideration needs to be given to whether the probationary period needs to be extended, in line with HR policies and procedures.
 - If the issue of capability is highlighted at the six month review, then a nine month review is needed, in line with the ASYE Guidance documentation.

Unsatisfactory Progress of the NQSW

- In the event that a NQSW fails to meet the ASYE standards, and the assessment process has been exhausted, the NQSW will not have been able to demonstrate that they can continue to practice as a competent social worker beyond the initial 12 months. In these circumstances consideration will need to be given to the continuing employment of the NQSW.

Administrative functions supporting the ASYE Programme

- The ASYE Co-Ordinator has responsibility for the administrative functions in relation to the Programme, including: applying for registration as an ASYE Programme Provider with the Department of Education and Skills for Care; ensuring that all NQSWs are registered on the Portal for funding purposes; providing information to the DfE and Skills for Care for audit purposes; maintaining oversight of the NQSW's progress through the ASYE Year; writing supporting guidance for the Programme and developing the Core ASYE curriculum.