

Process for the application of the Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)

1. Introduction

This document describes the process that applies to all Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) and outlines how the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is implemented and managed in the London Borough of Bexley. It should be read in conjunction with the ASYE Handbook which provides supporting guidance and templates for Line Managers and NQSWs. Additional guidance will be provided by the Adult Social Care Professional Standards Academy/Children's Social Work Academy.

ALL NQSW's contracts of employment are conditional upon passing the ASYE. A failure to do so will result in the contract of employment being terminated.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the ASYE

In response to the recommendations of the Social Work Reform Board, Bexley implemented an ASYE process in 2012. The aim is to "help newly qualified social workers develop their skills, knowledge and capability and strengthen their professional confidence" and to confirm the suitability of Newly Qualified Social Workers for a career in social work. ASYE is a single process across children's and adults' social work and has been aligned with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) and Social Work England Professional Standards to form the basis for assessment of NQSWs on ASYE.

By the end of the ASYE period social workers should have evidenced their development journey and practice in a wide range of tasks and roles and demonstrated how they have become more effective in their interventions. To achieve this, the Council has put in place a robust process providing support, review and assessment to ensure that NQSWs are able to become confident, competent professionals. Employers decide if their NQSWs have completed ASYE successfully.

The ASYE process:

- is an employer-based and employer-assessed process
- is aligned with other initiatives (such as the Employer Standards and Supervision Framework, Partnership Principles, the CPD Framework and the Knowledge and Skills Statements)
- offers defined support to NQSWs in their first year of employment
- aligns assessment against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS)
- complements Bexley's Probation Procedure

The ASYE final assessment decision can only be PASS or FAIL. Only in exceptional circumstances may the decision be to DEFER (see 1.5). Reaching a final assessment decision of FAIL could mean that the individual will not be able to continue to hold the protected title of Social Worker, and therefore impact their Social Work career.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that NQSWs and those conducting reviews and assessments take full responsibility for the process and apply the processes in a fair and consistent manner. Those NQSWs that pass the ASYE will be issued with a certificate from the relevant accrediting agency. At the time of writing this is Skills for Care.

1.2 Assessment against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Knowledge Skills Statements (KSS)

Assessment is carried out against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) - an overarching professional standards framework, originally developed by the Social Work Reform Board, and now managed and delivered by British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and the separate Knowledge and Skills Statements published by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education for Social Workers in Adult Services and for Child and Family social work respectively

These can be found as follows:

- [ASYE Capabilities Within The PCF](#)
- [KSS for Social Workers in Adult Services](#)
- [Knowledge and skills for child and family social work](#)

The PCF identifies 9 domains against which all NQSWs will be assessed during their ASYE. Rather than focusing on a 'single point' of assessment, evidence will be built up and reviewed over the year to show the NQSW's development over time and sufficiency in a range of essential skills, knowledge and values across a variety of cases and settings. The assessment process should demonstrate how the NQSW has progressed in each area of the PCF at the ASYE level throughout the year and provide ongoing evidence of KSS for final assessment.

1.3 Holistic Assessment

Evidence gathered from a range of work will be assessed to demonstrate professional capability against the 9 domains of the PCF and the KSS. The collection of evidence will be from a range of settings which will include direct observation, supervision, case records, service user feedback, feedback from other professionals, written critical analyses, meetings, quality of decisions, etc.

Professional supervision and assessment must be carried out by a qualified registered social worker and due time and attention should be given to reflection on practice through supervision as an essential component to the NQSW development process.

A holistic approach is central to assessment of capability and will include formative assessment - assessment that is designed to help social workers develop effectively by giving them ongoing feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained.

1.4 NQSW progress

Whilst the ASYE process itself includes formal reviews at 3,6 and 9 months, if at any time during the ASYE 12-month period concerns are raised about the NQSW's progress that need to be addressed formally these shall either be raised at one of the three scheduled reviews referred to above or at an additionally arranged meeting. In that instance the NSQW will be provided with details of the concerns in advance and shall be entitled to bring either a trade union representative or other work colleague to the meeting.

Where the concerns are serious such that termination of employment may be considered (at any point during the ASYE period) the meeting shall be chaired by a Deputy Director. In all other cases the manager

chairing the meeting should consider the information and responses of the employee. Subject to those considerations the NSQW should be advised of the impact of those concerns on their ASYE/employment. That may include a warning that unless improvement is made the employee may fail their ASYE and be dismissed.

Employees experiencing difficulties are encouraged to seek advice from their supervisor or ASYE Assessor /Practice Educator, Team Manager, Adult Social Care Professional Standards Academy, Children's Social Work Academy or HR Adviser as soon as possible

1.5 ASYE outcomes

By the end of the ASYE, NQSWs will need to be able to demonstrate proficiency across the KSS and all 9 of the PCF domains. NQSWs that pass their ASYE will be issued with a certificate from the relevant accrediting agency. At the time of writing this is Skills for Care.

Where the outcome is a fail, the NQSW cannot repeat their ASYE either with the same or another employer. Skills for Care and Social Work England will be advised.

The decision to defer and extend the ASYE can only be made in exceptional circumstances such as maternity, bereavement or long-term sickness absence lasting more than 30 days and must be agreed with the relevant Head of Service. The ASYE cannot be extended on grounds of capability or competence.

1.6 Resignation during the ASYE Process

NQSWs should be reminded that the ASYE is a national best practice process and that future employers will expect to see evidence of progress should they resign before completing the process.

NQSW contracts of employment in Bexley are subject to successful completion of ASYE and resignation during the ASYE period or within 24 months of completion will result in the Council recovering the investment at a rate of £5000 per NQSW.

2. Implementation of the ASYE within London Borough of Bexley

2.1 Who is eligible for the ASYE?

The ASYE will apply to all NQSW appointed to permanent posts. This will include any NQSW who has not already completed an ASYE elsewhere. NQSWs employed on a part-time basis will complete the ASYE process over a full-time equivalent (FTE) period. In exceptional circumstances where the ASYE is extended, the probationary period will automatically also be extended.

2.2 The ASYE process

NQSWs will be appointed to permanent posts. Where the designated team is not able to provide the range of activity or experience that the NQSW requires to demonstrate that they meet the PCF, a set piece of work or a short period of time in another work area may be appropriate to support and develop the

required capabilities. In such circumstances this will be identified and recorded as part of the Support and Assessment Agreement and through the review process.

Each NQSW will have access to both a Supervisor/Manager and a ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator who will provide ongoing support and assessment. Where a Supervisor/Manager or ASYE Assessor/ Practice Educator is not available for an extended period of time (e.g. sickness absence, maternity), the relevant Senior Manager will be responsible for liaising with their Head of Service and Adult Social Care Professional Standards Academy/Children's Social Work Academy lead to identify an alternative Supervisor/Manager or ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator or arrangement.

ASYE/Practice Educator Leads will provide support and access to learning resources.

The Supervisor/Line Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that the ASYE process is implemented and both ASYE Review Reports and Probation Reports are appropriately recorded.

2.3 The Support and Assessment Agreement

At the start of the ASYE, the Supervisor/Manager and ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator will complete a Support and Assessment agreement in a 3-way meeting with the employee. This Agreement is not an employment contract; it will confirm arrangements for the following:

- Reflective Supervision – at least weekly for the first six weeks, then at least fortnightly for the remainder of the first 6 months, and a minimum of monthly thereafter.
- Workload – normally over the course of the year this would be 90% of what is expected of a confident social worker in their 2nd or 3rd year of practice, weighted over the year by such things as complexity, risk and growing proficiency
- Professional development plan
- Protected time for personal development – normally equates to 10% over the course of the year

2.4 The formal review process

During the ASYE, formal reviews will take place at the 1st Probation Review at 1 month and at 3, 6, and 9 months. Any concerns or areas for development will be recorded at these reviews, together with action to help the NQSW meet the required standards.

At each review meeting the Support and Assessment Agreement will be reviewed to ensure it is being appropriately applied. If alternative arrangements need to be put in place (for example more frequent supervision, or further development activities or action), this will be recorded on the form, and other reporting schedules updated accordingly.

It is important that if there are any concerns that the NQSW may not be able to attain either the capability standards required or any general performance expectations, that this is raised with the NQSW and clearly recorded together with action for improvement and any appropriate development or training.

The Supervisor/Manager and ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator will work collaboratively to determine the recommendation as to whether the NQSW's progress is satisfactory at each review stage.

The Record of Support and Progressive Assessment (RoSPA) includes the Formal Review Stage Reports and the Supervisor/Manager should also discuss and record issues here that would otherwise be dealt with under the probation procedure, including attendance and conduct (see Section 6). The Supervisor/Manager must then complete the MyView Probation Report (guidance is given in Section 6 and within MyView regarding linking with ASYE Review Stage Reports). If there is any indication during the year that the employee might fail their ASYE, advice should be sought from HR and Adult Social Care Professional Standards Academy/Children's Social Work Academy as soon as possible.

3. Conclusion of the process

3.1 Final Assessment

Following the reviews at 3, 6 and 9 months, a final review will take place at 11 months. At the 11-month review, based on the completed CRL, RoSPA and other evidence presented in the portfolio and with reference to the three, six and nine month review meetings, the Supervisor/Line Manager and ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator will determine collaboratively if they will be endorsing a pass or fail (except for those where the decision has been deferred). All portfolios, both Pass and Fail recommendations will be submitted for Internal Moderation.

Recommendations to Fail

Where the recommendation is to fail, the employee may submit any representations about such recommendation within 7 calendar days of being notified of the recommendation for consideration by the second reviewer.

3.2 Moderation

Internal Moderation

The Council recognises the importance of consistency in the way that social workers are assessed across all social work services. An internal Moderation Panel consisting of representative Heads of Service and Service/Team/Assistant Team Managers from across social work services, together with OD Consultants and potentially a Partner University Representative will therefore moderate assessments and confirm decisions to Pass or Fail.

Internal Moderation combines two distinct activities –

- 1) Checking/confirming the assessment outcome through scrutiny and challenge** - this is confirmed by a 2nd Reviewer who will be an experienced Registered Social Worker or the Principal Social Worker to whom Deputy Directors have delegated this responsibility.
- 2) Moderation, to take an overview of the quality and consistency of support, assessments and decisions across Adults and Children's Services in Bexley** – this includes discussion between panel members about the internal scrutiny and challenge, feedback from both External and National Moderation Panels to ensure best practice and agreement on any changes/improvements to be implemented across Bexley's process

Completed Portfolios

All completed portfolios (both Pass and Fail Recommendations), including the NQSW Critical Reflection Logs (CRL) and the Records of Support and Progressive Assessment (RoSPA) completed by the Supervisor/Manager and ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator should be submitted to the ASYE Lead in either Children's or Adults' Services. The ASYE Lead will complete the Part 1 Quality checklist on the Internal Assessment and Moderation report and arrange for the assessment recommendation and evidence to be scrutinised by a 2nd Reviewer.

The 2nd Reviewer will complete Parts 2 and 3 of the Internal Assessment and Moderation report and confirm whether they agree that the evidence reviewed is consistent with the final recommendation; this will take place before or during a planned ASYE Joint Internal Moderation Panel Meeting.

Any portfolio where the Supervisor/Manager and ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator have endorsed a FAIL recommendation should be presented to the Internal Moderation Panel Chair as soon as such a Recommendation is indicated and the Chair will arrange the 2nd Reviewer scrutiny of the portfolio to be undertaken by the Principal Social Worker and convene an additional Internal Moderation Panel meeting where the findings will be submitted and recorded.

The Pass/Fail Decision is made by the 2nd Reviewer and will consider the information provided including any representations made by the NSQW referred to in 3.1 above.

Interim Portfolios

As part of ongoing quality assurance ASYE/Practice Educator Leads will bring a sample of interim portfolios to Internal Moderation Panels. In addition, ASYE Assessors/Practice Educators who have identified concerns about a NQSWs' progress or ability to meet the PCF/KSS requirements and have sought additional advice/reviews from the Supervisor/Manager or a 2nd ASYE Assessor/Practice Educator must bring such interim portfolios to Internal Moderation as soon as possible.

The content of the completed Internal Assessment and Moderation Reports for each NQSW will be discussed at the Joint Internal Moderation Panel and will be used to

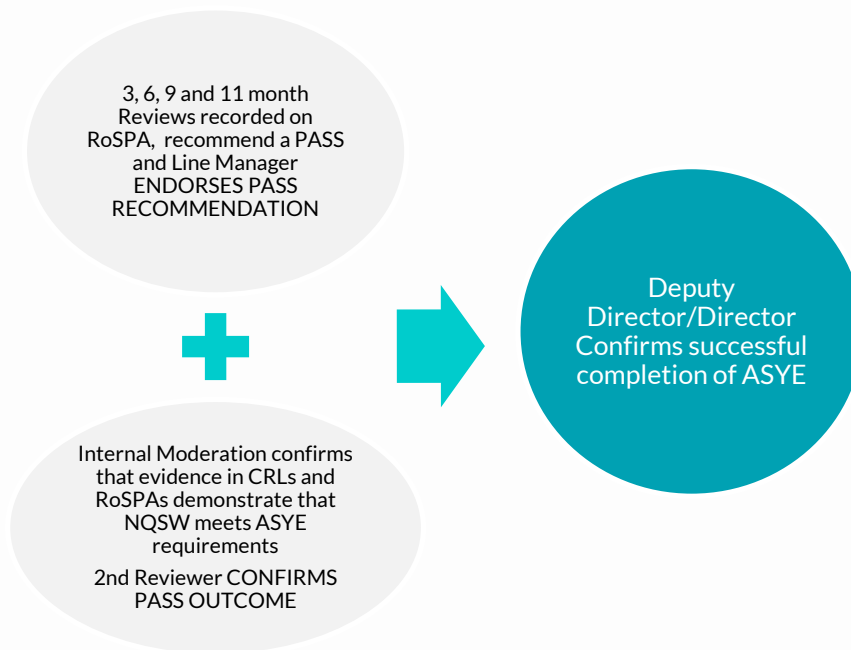
- scrutinise recommendations
- record outcomes,
- recommend actions and identify improvement plans to the assessment process where necessary
- identify exemplars for future NQSWs and Assessors
- determine best practice
- inform feedback to the organisation to assist in quality assuring the future implementation of the ASYE Process.

This will be recorded in summary on a Skills for Care Internal Moderation Report template.

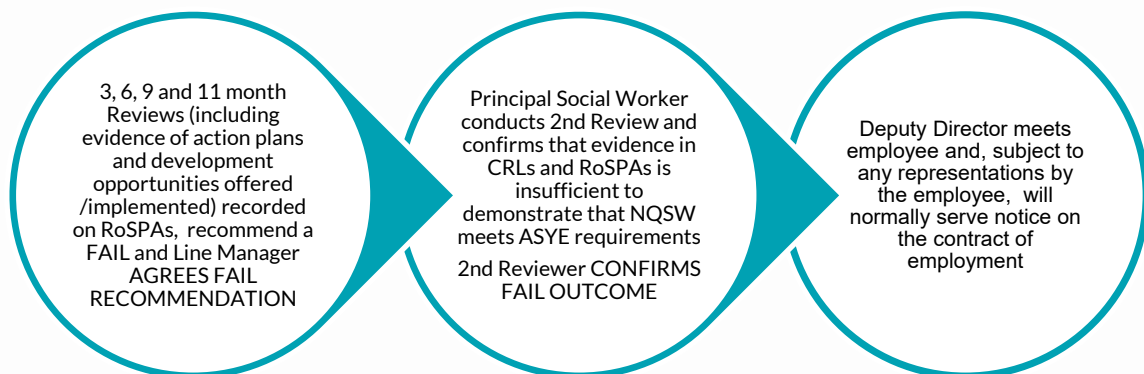
3.3 Moderation Outcomes

Outcomes may include

Pass: Where the 2nd reviewer agrees the recommendation to PASS, following Internal Moderation, the relevant Deputy Director/Director will confirm that the NQSW has successfully completed the ASYE and that their appointment should be confirmed. This will be confirmed in writing to the individual and to HR Business Centre and the certificate will be claimed from Skills for Care.



Fail: Where a Fail outcome is endorsed by the Principal Social Worker as 2nd Reviewer and recorded at an Internal Moderation Panel this will be referred to the relevant Deputy Director who will arrange to meet the employee and subject to any representations by the employee will normally serve notice on the contract of employment.



4. Appeals

An employee can appeal a decision to terminate their contract of employment. That appeal shall be heard in line with the Council's normal appeal processes and will be heard by another senior manager.

5. Quality Assurance

External Moderation

External moderation is an important element of the national system of quality assurance incorporated within the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services 2015. The purpose of the national quality assurance system is to give the profession confidence that employers' judgements are consistent across the country.

Skills for Care gathered employer views on models for a national system of external moderation. The majority of employers considered that two tiers of external moderation, a national moderation panel and partnership moderation would provide an acceptable level of scrutiny and would not be overly burdensome to administer and support.

Partnership Moderation

Every employer claiming Department of Health and Social Care funding via Skills for Care for ASYE is required to be a member of an ASYE partnership in order to participate in external or partnership moderation. The partnership moderation process will sample at least 10% of NQSW evidence during a 12 month period providing peer review, support, challenge and scrutiny of ASYE employer judgements in order to promote consistency and to identify and encourage the adoption of good practice

The London Borough of Bexley is a member of the South East London External Moderation Partnership; the other members are Bromley Council, Royal Borough of Greenwich, Lambeth Council, London Borough of Lewisham, Southwark Council, Hestia, University of Greenwich, Goldsmith's College and London South Bank University.

The purpose of external moderation is to scrutinise both the ASYE final assessment judgements and the ASYE support and assessment process. The process will consider whether employer assessments against the Knowledge and Skills Statements and the Professional Capabilities Framework are consistent, robust and accurate. Partnership moderation will not overturn an employer's final assessment judgement. Employees will not be identifiable as part of this process.

The quality assurance process will be used to inform any necessary changes to the processes in place for the ASYE and the skills and development of those involved in the process where appropriate. This may also include reviews by the University to their work with students in their final year of preparation to practice.

Common templates/checklists are used to guide the reviewers and a summary report is completed to make sure that information about quality and themes can be collated and sent to individual employers and assessors for their consideration. All partnership moderation panels are required to send a summary report and their Memorandum of Understanding/Collaboration to the national moderation panel for review at least once per year.

National Moderation Panel

The purpose of this panel is to scrutinise and review adult assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) assessment process and decisions from employers and partnerships throughout the country in order to promote consistency and inform future learning. It will usually meet twice yearly and will review a random sample of 5% or 60 assessment reports (whichever is greater), across the two meetings.

The assessment reports will include sets of evidence regarding individual newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) undertaking ASYE and internal moderation reports and the summary reports from partnership moderation meetings.

The panel will give feedback and make recommendations to employers and partnerships and also produce a national report of collated themes and messages; this may include recommending changes to documentation.

The panel will not overturn any ASYE employer judgements.

6. Relationship with Other HR Procedures

The probationary period for all NSQWs will be the duration of ASYE period. This will be a minimum of 12 months but will continue until the process described above has been completed. The exception to this will be any instance where the Deputy Director concludes that the contract should be terminated during the 12-month period in accordance with paragraph 1.4 or as provided for below.

The Council's normal probationary procedure is complementary to the ASYE process for all NSQWs and managers should hold the 1st probation review meeting at 1 month when notified via MyView. The manager conducting the 3,6 and 9 month ASYE reviews shall also use those meetings to discuss issues that would otherwise normally be dealt with under the probationary procedure, including attendance and conduct and to complete the MyView reports accordingly (with both 3 month Probation and ASYE Review reports coinciding and completing the 5 month Probation report alongside the 6 month ASYE Review Report). In addition to satisfactorily completing the ASYE the NSQW will also need to demonstrate acceptable standards of performance, conduct and attendance. Where these fall short, regardless of the outcome of the ASYE, this may also result in the termination of employment. However, that decision shall always be taken by a Deputy Director.

The Council's normal performance management, absence management and disciplinary procedures do not apply during the ASYE and will be dealt with as described above. Notwithstanding that NSQW's will be expected to comply with the Council's code of conduct, disciplinary rules and department and professional policies, procedures and standards.

The notice period during the AYSE will be one week on either side. In instances where gross misconduct is deemed to have occurred then summary dismissal may apply with no notice then being paid.