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▾ [Child and family social work](#)

Guidance

Assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE): framework

The framework sets out the ASYE programme's underpinning principles for newly qualified social workers in adult, and child and family services and for their employers.

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Applies to England

Contents

- [Overview](#)
- [Professional development and support](#)
- [Evidence requirements and assessment](#)
- [Quality assurance](#)

- [Support arrangements for NQSWs](#)
- [Assessments overview](#)
- [Final assessment and recommendations](#)
- [Moderation](#)
- [Programme deferrals and withdrawals](#)
- [Assessment fails](#)
- [Roles and responsibilities](#)
- [Assessors' and supervisors' toolkit](#)

Overview

The ASYE framework has 3 main elements:

- professional development and support
- evidence requirements and assessment
- quality assurance

The principles underpinning the ASYE programme are that:

- the voice of the newly qualified social worker (NQSW) is at the centre of the ASYE programme
- the framework supports a 'whole profession' approach to NQSW development
- employers are responsible for their ASYE programme
- it is fully inclusive and promotes anti-racist practice

You can access programme templates and guidance in the [child and family ASYE: programme resources](#).

Professional development and support

During the ASYE, NQSWs should have:

- regular supervision that includes time for critical reflection

- protected development time
- reduced workload allocation

For further information, refer to the [support arrangements for NQSWs](#).

Evidence requirements and assessment

Holistic assessment based on the [professional capabilities framework \(PCF\)](#) and the [post qualifying standards \(PQS\): knowledge and skills statements](#).

NQSWs should evidence their progressive development of professional capability through:

- 3 direct observations
- 3 pieces of feedback from children and young people who need care and support
- 3 pieces of feedback from other professionals
- 3 assessed examples of written reports
- critical reflections at 6 and 12 months

This should be recorded in the [record of support and progressive assessment \(RSPA\)](#) and the NQSW's evidence of progression.

Quality assurance

The set out the elements expected of a successful ASYE programme. The criteria support the continuous development and quality of the programme.

It is not expected that an organisation will meet all the criteria at the same level in one year. Use the national evaluation criteria as a guide.

Support arrangements for NQSWs

Support for NQSWs to develop to the ASYE standard is one of the core dimensions of the programme.

The minimum expectations of the support arrangements for all NQSWs completing the ASYE programme are set out in the [standards for employers of social workers](#).

Critical reflection is an important part of the support arrangements. There are 4 support arrangements to facilitate this.

ASYE assessor

Assessors are registered social workers, experienced in practice. This role is enhanced if their practice is informed by the [practice educator professional standards](#).

You can learn more about the role of the assessor in the [roles and responsibilities](#) section.

Supervision

Regular supervision should be provided:

- weekly, from weeks 1 to 6
- fortnightly, from week 7 to month 6
- monthly, from months 6 to 12

Supervisory sessions should last a minimum of 1.5 hours and provide critical reflection.

Reduced workload

This is equivalent to about 90% of what is expected of a social worker in the same role in their second or third year, weighted over the course of the year by considerations of:

- case complexity
- risk
- growing proficiency

It is helpful if the assessor – if different from the line manager – is consulted in decisions about the allocation of work to the NQSW, as they will be familiar with the NQSW's learning needs and their level of capability and confidence.

Protected development time

This is equivalent to 10% of the NQSW's working time over the course of the ASYE programme, which, in turn, equates to 2 days per month if they are employed full-time. If the NQSW is working reduced hours, it is calculated on a pro-rata basis. Protected development time can include:

- attending training sessions and other learning and development opportunities provided by the programme
- stepping back from their practice to engage with research and theoretical perspectives relating to the practice issues they are experiencing

NQSWs who work reduced hours (part-time)

If a NQSW is working reduced hours, the support arrangements should be provided on a pro-rata basis. This is subject to the following considerations:

- the support arrangements are a minimum
- tailoring the programme to the individual NQSW might mean that some of the support arrangements, such as the frequency and duration of supervision, are enhanced to take account of their confidence and capability levels in the earlier review periods of the programme

Assessments overview

NQSWs should be assessed against the [post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements for child and family practitioners](#). This includes NQSWs placed in child and adolescent mental health services.

The assessment should evidence the NQSW's continuing progressive development throughout their ASYE and cover a wide range of sources and professionals.

Employers can choose any assessment process that will demonstrate that the NQSW has met the requirements of the relevant PQS for child and family services and [NQSW \(ASYE\) level descriptor of the PCF](#). The employer's ASYE assessor makes the final ASYE pass or fail recommendation at the end of the programme.

The assessor may pass or fail the NQSW on their own or in partnership with others – for example, the NQSW's line manager or ASYE co-ordinator. It is helpful for the NQSW if the assessor remains constant throughout their ASYE, although this may not always be possible.

Change in assessor

If the assessor changes, the current assessor should liaise with the ASYE co-ordinator and the NQSW's operational team manager to develop a plan to ensure continuing support for the NQSW.

There should be a formal handover with the NQSW, and the circumstances of the change in the assessor should be recorded in the next review report.

The new assessor and the NQSW should review the support and assessment agreement to discuss any changes that may need to be made to the agreement,

which should then be re-drafted, re-signed and re-dated.

Final assessment and recommendations

A pass or fail recommendation should be recorded at the final review. The internal moderation panel will review the evidence in support of the recommendation and decide on behalf of the organisation to confirm or not confirm the assessor's recommendation.

The panel should be chaired by the principal social worker and include a variety of members. Members can be assessors, team managers, senior managers or people with lived experience. Members of the panel cannot only be the assessors, as this dilutes the quality-assurance aspect because they would be moderating their own work.

If the panel declines to confirm the assessor's recommendation, the organisation's processes and procedures will determine the subsequent course of action.

In making the final pass or fail recommendation, the assessment process and its evidence should be judged by the moderation process to ensure it is:

- accurate – consistent with the expectations of the relevant PQS and the PCF NQSW (ASYE) level descriptor
- valid – based on evidence that reflects the entire range of the NQSW's work, practice and continual progression throughout their ASYE
- robust – based on evidence that is checked and consistent, and leads to a defensible judgement
- sufficient – based on a sufficiently broad and varied range of evidence, presenting a holistic perspective of the NQSW's progressive development

Moderation

The internal and external moderation processes are an important part of the ASYE framework.

The moderation processes were developed along with [guidance and templates](#) in collaboration with the sector. The templates focus on providing feedback to the employer about how the consistency of NQSW's experience across the dimensions of support, assessment and outcome could be developed further. This feedback is quality-assurance evidence.

The external moderation process is good practice for the child and family ASYE programme.

Internal and external (partnership) moderation processes ensure that:

- there is national consistency in the professional practice demonstrated by social workers when they have been in employment for 12 months
- there is national consistency in the support, assessment and outcomes experienced by NQSWs
- feedback is provided to ASYE co-ordinators and their organisations on the themes and issues relating to the consistency of their NQSWs' experience
- the feedback is collated with other quality-assurance evidence in the process of developing the organisation's annual [Action plan for continuous development](#) (MS Word Document, 946 KB).

Internal moderation

Employers take responsibility for NQSWs completing the ASYE programme. The assessor recommends an outcome of pass or fail and the employer decides whether to confirm this recommendation through their internal moderation processes.

Internal moderation should be the central element of the quality-assurance process. It also provides the opportunity for the employer to review:

- and ensure consistency in the assessor's practice
- overall programme delivery and to highlight any issues in the NQSW's experience of the support, assessment and outcomes provided
- NQSW feedback on their experience of the programme, which will also help to inform its development

Before a portfolio is submitted to an internal moderation panel, anonymisation and confidentiality should be carried out in accordance with the organisation's guidance on anonymisation.

Templates and guidance to support the internal moderation process include:

- a [Statement of anonymisation and confidentiality](#) (MS Word Document, 960 KB)
- [Internal moderation supporting guidance](#) (MS Word Document, 658 KB)
- a [Summary report of internal moderation processes](#) (MS Word Document, 953 KB)

External moderation

Internal moderation panel decisions are moderated by the external moderation partnership to ensure they meet the programme requirements.

The external moderation partnership scrutinises the decision-making of an internal panel to ensure that the employer:

- has made decisions that are accurate, valid, robust and sufficient
- is providing the expected support and assessment

processes

External moderation supports national consistency. It also generates feedback and quality-assurance evidence for participating organisations. They can use this in the development of their annual action plan for the continuous development of their programme.

External moderation is good practice in child and family ASYE programmes.

A 10% sample of average and good assessment outcomes from each programme participating in the partnership are reviewed by the external moderation partnership, along with fails and marginal decisions.

The moderation of a set of evidence by the external panel can be recorded for the submitting organisation in the external panel reviewer template.

Templates and guidance to support the external moderation process include:

- [External moderation guidance](#) (MS Word Document, 656 KB)
- a [Memorandum of collaboration guidance](#) (MS Word Document, 951 KB)
- a [External moderation reviewer template](#) (MS Word Document, 965 KB)
- a [External moderation partnership summary report](#) (MS Word Document, 963 KB)

Programme deferrals and withdrawals

ASYE employers and assessors will manage NQSWs' deferrals or withdrawals from the programme.

Deferrals

The ASYE is a 12-month learning and development

programme. It is expected that a NQSW will be able to demonstrate their professional development within 12 months. A deferral is a postponement of the ASYE that marks a break in the process.

The grounds for deferral are limited. They include:

- long-term sickness
- maternity or parental leave
- circumstances when the employer is temporarily not able to put in place the required levels of support and assessment for the NQSW, including:
 - appropriate support for someone with neurodivergence, such as dyslexia
 - appropriate support for English as an additional language
 - problems in obtaining team support (for example, finding a new supervisor, if the original one is no longer available)
 - a NQSW transferring into the team midway through the ASYE programme to allow time for an induction period
- other exceptional circumstances, such as:
 - a formal investigation into an allegation of poor behaviour by the NQSW
 - the implementation of fitness-to-practise procedures

In the circumstances listed, the deferral may also include an agreed period for the increased levels of support to be established.

The length of the deferral period should be agreed between the NQSW, the assessor and the ASYE programme lead.

Once the programme resumes, the amount of time outstanding should match the remaining time left of the

programme – for example, if the deferral was made after 7 months, there should be 5 months left of the programme for the NQSW to complete.

Prior to deferring, there should be:

- a review of the NQSW's progress to date
- a formal summative review, at which the assessment documentation is updated accordingly
- a record of the deferral as part of the documentation

Before resuming the programme, there should be:

- a review meeting between the NQSW, the assessor, the team manager and the co-ordinator to agree a plan to support the NQSW's return to their ASYE programme
- consideration for providing the NQSW with a period to feel comfortable in their role again before resuming their ASYE programme (this would depend on the length of the deferral period)
- a review of the NQSW's learning and support needs, where their professional development plan is updated

Deferrals will be at the discretion of employers. Employers should have performance management and other human resources (HR) policies in place to cover these eventualities.

Multiple deferrals for different reasons are at the discretion of the employer.

Withdrawals

A withdrawal is a decision by the NQSW to opt out of the ASYE programme. This typically occurs if the NQSW leaves their job. It can sometimes be a sign that the NQSW is struggling and may need additional support.

If the NQSW is still in post, the implications of the withdrawal on the NQSW's employment status are the employer's responsibility.

Where possible, the employer should find out the reason for the withdrawal. It may be the result of the NQSW realising that they are not in the right profession. It is important that the employer updates their documentation outlining the reason the NQSW has withdrawn, for future reference.

Assessment fails

A failure is a formal decision made by the employer on the recommendation of the assessor. A NQSW who fails the ASYE cannot re-do it.

Through review and supervision, concerns can be identified at an early stage so appropriate action can be taken, involving senior managers, HR and a support plan, if necessary.

If an NQSW is failing their ASYE programme, their employer will need to consider appropriate options on a case-by-case basis. If the employer has concerns about the NQSW's fitness to practise, they should [contact the regulator, Social Work England](#).

In making this decision, the employer should be confident that:

- all the relevant support options have been provided to the NQSW
- the assessment documentation has been fully completed
- the decision has been ratified by the internal moderation panel

Any learning for the organisation should also be identified at this stage.

It is very important that the employer updates their documentation and records a failure recommendation.

The ASYE programme is most effective when it is embedded within HR performance management policies and procedures. Complications can occur when the organisation's probation period does not align with the 12 months of the ASYE programme. An appeals process, aligned with HR, should be in place.

Appeal an assessment outcome

The Department for Education (DfE) does not intervene in appeals.

It is the employer's responsibility to notify Social Work England if they believe the reason for the failure decision breaches professional standards.

The employer should have in place an appeals process so a NQSW can appeal the final assessment decision. The details of the process should be mentioned at the start of the ASYE programme and be recorded in the support and assessment agreement.

Roles and responsibilities

AYSE assessors

The ASYE assessor must be a registered and experienced social worker who may or may not be a [practice educator](#). The assessor might already be experienced in supervising others, including students and previous NQSWs.

The assessor can be the NQSW's line manager or an external assessor. The assessor must work closely with the NQSW's line manager throughout the duration of the programme.

The role of the assessor is to:

- support the NQSW in the development of their social work practice
- provide ongoing developmental feedback to promote practice change
- undertake an assessment of the NQSW's progressive development, leading to a pass or fail recommendation at the end of the programme
- ensure that the NQSW receives the support set out in the [standards for employers of social workers](#) (together with the NQSW's line manager)

Supporting a failing NQSW

If any concerns are raised about the progress, performance and capability of the NQSW, the assessor should liaise with the ASYE co-ordinator or senior manager, workforce development and HR.

A support and action plan should be put in place to support a failing NQSW. The process should be formally managed in line with the employer's performance, capability and disciplinary procedures.

If the concerns are of a serious nature or there are fitness-to-practise issues, the assessor should consider raising these with the principal social worker or senior manager. They will offer support in deciding an appropriate way forward, which may include approaching [Social Work England](#).

More information about the assessor's role and responsibilities are set out in the [support and assessment agreement](#) in the programme resources.

Newly qualified social workers

An NQSW is a social worker who is registered with Social Work England and is in their first year of post-

qualifying practice.

NQSWs are required to re-register with Social Work England between 1 September and 30 November each year. NQSWs will need to meet continuing professional development (CPD) requirements and pay an annual fee to re-register.

NQSWs can use the evidence from their ASYE programme evidence towards their first year's CPD.

An NQSW can complete their ASYE programme on a full-time or part-time basis, depending on their contract of employment.

ASYE co-ordinators and senior managers

ASYE co-ordinators and senior managers, including the principal social worker, will be involved in a successful ASYE programme.

ASYE co-ordinator

An ASYE co-ordinator may or may not be a registered social worker.

Their responsibilities include:

- undertaking the funding application
- quality-assuring the delivery of the programme and driving its continuous improvement
- organising:
 - ASYE workshops
 - learning opportunities and group supervision
 - an NQSW 'buddy' programme of support
 - ASYE learning and development events

They will also: - oversee ASYE assessors and line managers - support failing NQSWs - update and maintain the ASYE programme handbook

Senior managers

A senior manager:

- oversees other managers
- is responsible for organisational programmes such as the ASYE programme
- can be a principal social worker for the organisation

The ASYE programme will benefit from the active support and involvement of senior managers. This level of support will impact all those involved in the ASYE programme and should be reflected in the organisational ASYE documents, policies and procedures.

Principal social workers

Principal social workers may have responsibility for the:

- oversight and quality assurance of the programme
- welfare of all those involved in it

The supervisor (reflective supervision)

Reflective supervision is an important element of the support provided to a NQSW. It provides a safe and emotionally supportive space and should facilitate a NQSW's critical reflection and support the management of their work.

Supervision must:

- be provided by a registered social worker
- meet the [employer standards for supervision](#)

The supervisor should be familiar with their own organisation's supervision policy when providing this support to a NQSW.

Each programme will have their own model governing who provides supervision. In some programmes, these elements are delivered by different social workers. For example, the assessor might provide supervision that promotes the development of the NQSW's critical-reflection capability and the team manager will provide supervision of case management.

The social workers involved in providing the supervision should liaise regularly to gain a full picture of the NQSW's progressive learning and development.

In addition to these supervisions, group supervision facilitated by an experienced social worker can be used to provide additional support and development for the NQSW. If there are any difficulties in this shared approach, the supervisor should seek guidance from the ASYE co-ordinator or senior manager.

Assessors' and supervisors' toolkit

Refer to the [Assessors and supervisors toolkit](#) (PDF, 279 KB, 4 pages).

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[↑ Contents](#)

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[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

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