

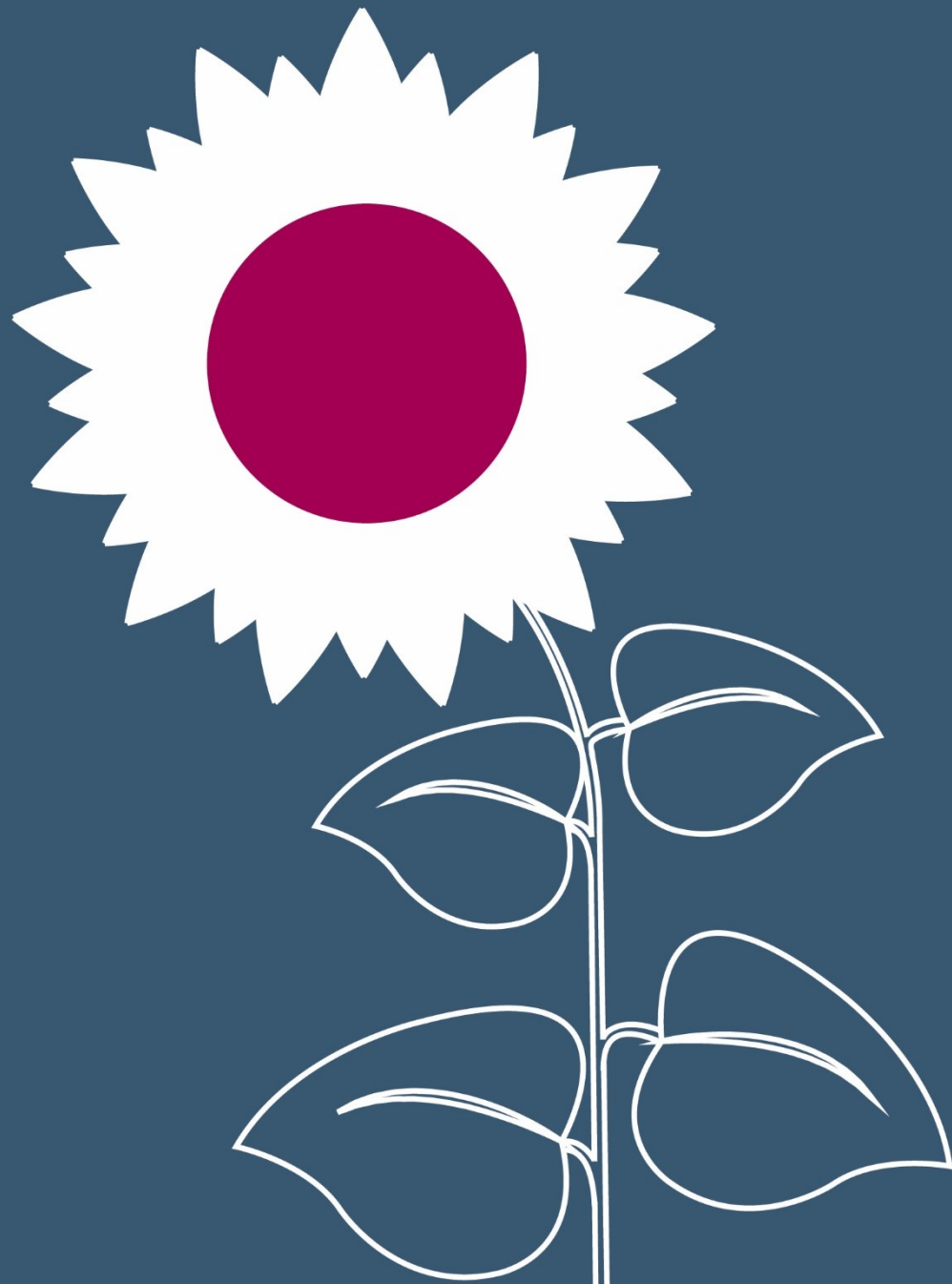


City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

# Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) for Newly Qualified Social Workers Policy

Tri x 1\_1\_7 (September 2024)

Review September 2025



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## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) within Stoke-on-Trent City Council Children’s Social Care have met the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS for Child and Family Practitioners) and are competent, capable practitioners within this context at the end of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (the Care Review) recommended significant reform to the operation of Children’s Social Care, underpinned by a highly effective workforce. In *Stable Homes, Built on Love* the Department for Education (DfE) have committed to establishing a new Early Career Framework (ECF) for social workers. The initial induction period for all social workers will be extended to two years with an offer of further training and development for another three years. The programme will be underpinned by a new framework document, setting out the knowledge and skills social workers need to support and protect children and families. The ECF will ensure that wherever they are in the country new social workers will have a strong entry to the profession, helping to improve services and improve retention. Whilst the ECF is in development the ASYE will remain for NQSWs.

The aim of the ASYE is to ensure that NQSWs receive appropriate and consistent support in their first year of employment so that they are able to become confident, competent professionals. The programme will support NQSW’s to make the transition from student to qualified practitioner.

# Applicability

This policy applies to:

- All NQSWs receiving support under the ASYE programme.
- Anyone with responsibility for line management and supervision of NQSWs within Children's Social Care.
- Anyone involved in the process of assessing, coaching and mentoring NQSWs as part of the ASYE.

## Eligibility Criteria for the ASYE

NQSWs will be required to undertake the programme if they meet the following criteria:

- Completed their Social Work qualification within the previous two years and not commenced or completed an ASYE programme prior to this
- Newly Qualified Social Workers who have qualified in Scotland, Ireland and Wales will be supported through the ASYE programme.

NQSWs who qualified outside of England will be eligible if they have completed a recognised social work degree no more than two years before the start of the ASYE.

NQSWs who are agency workers should be supported by their employer (i.e. the agency) to complete their ASYE.

Due to the requirements of the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for Child and Family Practitioners, the ASYE is routinely completed in the following teams: Children's Support and Safeguarding Teams (CSS), Children in Care (CIC), Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST), Child Exploitation (CE) Team, Children with Disabilities (CWD), Next Steps Team and the Youth Offending Service (YOS). For NQSWs completing their ASYE in Fostering and Adoption Teams additional shadowing and co-working opportunities may be required to ensure that the NQSWs within this area have met the requirements of the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for Child and Family Practitioners.

# Content of the Programme

- a. Learning Agreement and Professional Development Plan – The NQSW, their Manager and their ASYE Lead are required to agree and sign this within the first month of employment. This will be reviewed at three, six, nine and eleven months.
- b. During the course of the ASYE the NQSW will gather evidence of their progress against the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS), with reference to the PCF, which they will record in the ASYE portfolio. This will be discussed in supervision with the NQSW's Manager to support the assessment of their progress.
- c. Monthly ASYE workshops will be arranged and attendance at workshops is mandatory for NQSW in their ASYE year.
- d. The NQSW will complete three Direct Observations, all of which should be observed by a qualified, registered Social Worker (not another NQSW), preferably familiar with the NQSWs daily practice.
- e. The NQSW will have a caseload cap of 16 cases (individual children, not families) which must not be exceeded during the course of the ASYE. It is the responsibility of the NQSW's Manager to ensure this is maintained. It is an expectation that the NQSW 's caseload will increase during the ASYE up to a maximum of 16 cases and that these will be of appropriate complexity in relation to the NQSW's level of capability, capacity and stage of development.
- f. Caseload protection for NQSWs will specify what type of work they are able to undertake up to the nine month point where their ability to progress to holding more complex work will be determined. Up to nine months NQSWs will experience a phased increase of complexity within their caseload to include co-working as specified in Section 7 of this policy.
- g. A bespoke induction, arranged through the Learning and Development Academy, will be arranged for NQSWs to complete at the start of their ASYE which includes the City Council Corporate Induction. Induction is also and ongoing process facilitated by individual teams. [Induction page on the Practice Hub](#)
- h. Each NQSW is unique and will therefore possess differing levels of individual skills and life experiences. Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to the ASYE programme, ensuring that all NQSWs are offered an ASYE experience which is tailored to their individual needs, including cultural and learning needs and identities. An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Tool has been completed to ensure that NQSWs and those supporting them are not treated unfairly or discriminated against because of their background or characteristics. Additional groups and mentoring sessions are available so that employees from a diverse background are not disadvantaged.
- i. NQSW completing the ASYE may take up to Six study days during the year in order to consolidate learning and complete required portfolio work with the agreement of their manager.

# Timescales

The ASYE is a 12-month programme for full time Newly Qualified Social Workers. For part time NQSW's the ASYE will be an 18-month programme. It may be possible to extend the ASYE beyond this limit where the NQSW is unable to demonstrate achievement of the necessary standards due to circumstances outside of their control. This would require negotiation with, and approval by, their Principal Manager in discussion with the Principal Child and Family Social Worker/Strategic Managers/ HR as appropriate.

Managers may agree to defer the final assessment of NQSWs in cases such as maternity leave and long-term sickness absences. Again, in such circumstances, this should be discussed with HR/ Managers as appropriate.

If a NQSW joins the City Council having already partially completed their ASYE, they do not need to start the ASYE again. Their Manager should decide on the level of evidence the NQSW presents for ASYE assessment, including any statements from previous employers about how they have progressed and the standard already achieved. The timescale for completion of the ASYE will take into account the period already completed, and the total time will not be less than one year.

Where it is agreed that the ASYE will be longer than 12 or 18 months (full time/part time respectively), it cannot take longer than, or be extended beyond, two years, irrespective of the circumstances. NQSW's not completing within two years will be reviewed in discussions with HR and overseen by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PCFSW) in respect of next steps.

The requirements to successfully complete the ASYE should be an integral part of the probationary period assessment for newly appointed NQSWs. A probationary period may be extended if for example the NQSW has a period of maternity leave or long-term sick leave.

If, at any point during the probationary period, there are serious concerns about the NQSW's potential to complete the ASYE successfully, these must be addressed as soon as possible in conjunction with HR. The NQSW's manager should convene a meeting with the NQSW in conjunction with HR to discuss the concerns and the action that will be taken. The concerns and the action plans arising from it should be confirmed in writing to the NQSW as soon as possible after the meeting.

Where the concerns continue, and are not addressed by the remedial action agreed, the matter will be dealt with under the terms of the capability procedure as with any other employee of the City Council working within Early Intervention and Children's Social Care. This will also be the case for any newly appointed workers not subject to the ASYE programme.

# Supporting NQSWs with Professional Development

Priorities for learning and development and plans for how these will be achieved will be agreed between the NQSW, their Manager and ASYE Lead and recorded in the Learning Plan.

The NQSW will be required to undertake self-directed learning to include ASYE evidence, informed reading, shadowing and seeking feedback from observed practice. The NQSW should keep a record of Continuing Professional Development and evidence required to meet Social Work England's registration requirements.

In supporting the development of practice skills, confidence and reflection NQSW's will have the ability to take up to six study days during the ASYE. These must be taken in consultation and agreement with line managers who have a full oversight of the study being undertaken.

## Phased Increase of Complex Working

At the nine-month ASYE review it will be determined whether the NQSW is ready to proceed to holding more complex work alone.

**Until this nine month point NQSW caseloads must observe the following:**

### **Child Protection (CP)**

- **No NQSW must be allocated CP work before their six month review, regardless of circumstances. Where an NQSW evidences competency to undertake CP work between six - nine months, the Complex Working Agreement may be completed and agreed with the NQSW, their manager and ASYE Lead via ASYE review or formal meeting.**
  - NQSWs must not be allocated CP children/families. They are able to co-work these with a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker if their manager is confident of their ability to manage this responsibility.
  - NQSWs must not complete statutory CP visits without being accompanied by a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker (this should be the allocated social worker unless there are extenuating circumstances).
  - NQSWs must not chair CP meetings without being accompanied by a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker (this should be the allocated social worker unless there are extenuating circumstances).
  - NQSWs can complete any direct work required.
- \* Prior to the nine-month point, if a child/family allocated to a NQSW progresses to CP, this child/family must be reallocated to a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker with the NQSW co-working\*

## Care Proceedings

- **No NQSW should be allocated care proceedings before the nine-month ASYE Review point.**
- NQSWs can co-work care proceedings with more experienced workers as the allocated worker.
- NQSWs must not attend court without a more experienced social worker/manager to support.

## Child in Need (CiN)

- NQSWs must not chair CiN meetings or complete CiN visits without being accompanied by a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker until:
  - a) they have shadowed these sufficiently with a more experienced social worker;
  - b) the manager is confident of their ability to undertake these tasks and this is discussed and recorded in supervision;
  - c) the NQSW feels confident to undertake these tasks alone.
- NQSWs can complete any direct work required, contribute to meetings and help to complete risk assessments and parenting assessments being held by more experienced (non-ASYE) social workers.

## Private Law (S37 & S7)

- **No NQSW must be allocated private law work before their three-month review, regardless of circumstances.**
- After the three month point NQSWs are able to undertake private law work in line with their capability and where managers feel it is appropriate to allocate this work provided that:
  - a) they have shadowed these sufficiently with a more experienced social worker;
  - b) the manager is confident of their ability to undertake these tasks and this is discussed and recorded in supervision;
  - c) the NQSW feels confident to undertake these tasks;
  - d) the work is closely overseen by a more experienced social worker/manager.
- NQSWs are able to write private law reports under the close guidance of a more experienced social worker/manager and these must always be signed off by a manager before being submitted.
- \* NQSWs must always be accompanied to court by their manager or more experienced social work colleague.

## **Children in Care (CiC)**

- Children in long-term matched, settled placements and where care proceedings have concluded, can be allocated to NQSWs and they are able to complete these statutory visits alone.
- NQSWs are able to write statutory review reports for children they are co-working with more experienced social workers.

### **Until the three-month ASYE Review:**

- Children subject to ICO (Interim Care Orders) must not be allocated to NQSWs and they must not complete statutory visits to these children without being accompanied by a more experienced (non-ASYE) social worker (this should be the allocated social worker unless there are extenuating circumstances).

### **After the three-month Review:**

- For children living at home on care orders it will be the decision of the NQSW's manager as to whether they are able to be managed by an NQSW prior to the nine-month point. This will depend on the status and stability of the child/young person.
- For children/young people experiencing complex issues such as gangs, CSE and missing episodes it is at the discretion of the manager whether an NQSW is able to case hold or whether this should be managed through a co-working arrangement.
- NQSWs are able to undertake court work in line with their capability and where managers feel it is appropriate to allocate this work provided that:
  - a) they have shadowed these sufficiently with a more experienced social worker;
  - b) the manager is confident of their ability to undertake these tasks and this is discussed and recorded in supervision;
  - c) the NQSW feels confident to undertake these tasks;
  - d) the work is closely overseen by a more experienced social worker/manager.
- NQSWs should not chair complex multi-agency meetings without support from a more experienced social worker.

**\* Each NQSW is individual and any managers allocating work outside of this policy must ensure adequate support is available to the NQSW via co-working/additional supervision, recorded in the Complex Work Agreement and that they have clear oversight of the NQSW's work.**



# Holistic Assessment Process

The key principle of the assessment is that different types of evidence is gathered from a range of work that is sufficient to demonstrate how the NQSW has met the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS for Child and Family Practitioners and is working at the relevant ASYE level of the PCF.

The PCF remains the “overarching professional standards framework” for Social Workers whilst the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) details what a qualified Child and Family Social Worker should be able to do and apply their learning and development in direct work with Children, Young People and their Families and Carers.

Evidence will be submitted by the NQSW from their everyday role and recorded within their ASYE Portfolio and Direct Observations of Practice.

## Assessment

Robust judgements about the performance of the NQSW must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced registered Social Worker who manages the NQSW whose judgement is central in making a holistic decision about the quality of performance.

During the first month of the ASYE, a meeting will be held between the NQSW’s Manager, their ASYE Lead and the NQSW to complete the Learning Agreement.

A formal assessment of progress will be made at key stages during the ASYE via reviews at:

- three months;
- six months;
- nine months;
- eleven months (if necessary).

For part time workers, reviews will continue at three monthly interviews throughout the duration of their ASYE.

These assessments will involve the NQSW, Manager and their ASYE Lead as a minimum. The ASYE Review will be used to facilitate the review of progress against the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) and PCF at each meeting and will summarise the discussion, record progress and set out the action plan with new targets/milestones for the next review period.

Each NQSW is individual and will therefore possess a differing level of individual skill, experience and knowledge. Work allocated to the NQSW will take account of this, and it will inform the Manager on what level and complexity of work will be assigned and the level of support necessary. The Learning Plan will reflect workload and support agreed and the Complex Work Agreement must be discussed and completed within the ASYE Review for the NQSW to progress to work with complexity before the nine-month point.

If the NQSW has any concerns about their support, training, guidance or the opportunities provided for development, these should be raised in the first instance with their ASYE Lead who will liaise with their Manager.

## Outcomes

After the final Review the ASYE Portfolio, three Direct Observations and Manager's Final Report will be considered by an Internal Moderation Panel chaired by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PCFSW). The Panel will make a decision about whether the NQSW has successfully completed the ASYE. If further information or evidence is required in order to make the decision, the Panel may adjourn and make this request to the NQSW and his/her Manager. Any request must be responded to promptly in order not to unnecessarily delay a decision.

In exceptional circumstances where the panel decision is that the NQSW has failed to complete the ASYE successfully, where a borderline pass has been achieved or where there has been disagreement about outcomes, the evidence will be referred to an independent Strategic Manager, who will consider both the NQSW's evidence and the process of support and assessment the NQSW has had during the ASYE.

The NQSW will be informed of the decision of the Panel in writing which will be either that:

- The ASYE has been successfully completed; or
- The NQSW has not met the standards required to complete the ASYE successfully and cannot continue to be employed as a qualified Social Worker within Stoke-On-Trent City Council.

If the decision of the panel is that the ASYE has not been successfully completed, the provisions of the capability procedure will apply, i.e. it will be deemed that the NQSW is unable to carry out the duties of their post to an acceptable standard because they do not have the requisite qualifications.

Following successful completion of the ASYE, each Social Worker will receive a certificate of completion from Skills for Care and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

## Failure to complete ASYE

If an NQSW fails to complete the ASYE successfully, the City Council will consider the need to inform the regulator of any fitness to practice concerns as may be necessary.

# Roles and Responsibilities

The ASYE Lead is responsible for:

- Convening, coordinating and minuting a Learning Agreement meeting and subsequent reviews with the NQSW and their Manager.
- Ensuring that the procedure for the ASYE is managed appropriately in accordance with these agreed standards and is delivered across Early Intervention and Children's Social Care.
- Liaising with the NQSW and their Manager if additional support is required.
- Providing monthly workshops for NQSWs to support their learning and development.
- Continually benchmarking and reviewing the ASYE against other ASYE programmes in place across England. They will work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to identify and share best practice and to seek partnership arrangements to support ASYE decisions where appropriate.

**The NQSW's Manager has overall responsibility for undertaking a holistic assessment of the NQSW's progress and will:**

- Ensure the NQSW is offered an appropriate induction and learning experience during the ASYE and monitoring their progress in learning the professional role.
- Attend a Learning Agreement and subsequent review meetings prepared to discuss progress with the NQSW and their ASYE Lead.
- Ensure the NQSW's caseload does not exceed 16 allocated individual children, not families, during the course of the ASYE. Identify and allocate appropriate work to the NQSW with regard to the appropriate level of complexity involved in relation to the NQSW's capacity, capability and stage of development.
- Provide supervision as set out in these procedures and the Supervision Policy. Supervision is critical for the development of reflective abilities during the first 12 months and should be considered a priority. NQSWs should have reflective supervision with their Manager weekly for the first six weeks, fortnightly between six weeks and six months and monthly between six and 12 months [Supervision document on the Practice Hub](#).
- Liaise with the ASYE Lead about the NQSW's progress, alerting HR if necessary, especially if there are concerns so that support can be added to the NQSW's Personal Development Plan.
- Seek feedback from a variety of sources and share this feedback at formal reviews.
- Monitor the NQSW's progress and development against the KSS, making a judgement of this within the Manager's Final Report about their ability to pass the ASYE.

- Have responsibility for assessing whether the NQSW meets expectations of a Social Worker at the end of the assessed year and make a recommendation of pass or fail to the Internal Moderation Panel, having confidence that the NQSW has either met or not met the requirements of the KSS.
- Not take NQSW who have not completed their ASYE when contracting workers from an agency.
- Continually monitor and review the arrangements for the ASYE and discuss with NQSW and other stakeholders their experience during the ASYE so that ongoing improvements can be considered and made.

**The Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) will:**

- Undertake an initial self-assessment of their confidence/ability against the requirements of the KSS;
- Attend Initial Learning Agreement and subsequent review meetings prepared to discuss progress, ensuring that Portfolio evidence of work completed is available to the review if requested;
- Prepare for and attend supervision (including ASYE workshops and group reflective supervision sessions) and take responsibility for identifying his/her own learning needs.
- Use supervision sessions constructively to develop learning and to reflect on and evaluate practice;
- Provide their Manager with evidence of work completed;
- Complete the ASYE portfolio and take responsibility for meeting the ASYE timetable in regards to portfolio submission dates;
- Attend mandatory monthly workshops and take responsibility for arranging study days in conjunction with their Manager;
- Highlight to their ASYE Lead and Manager any breach of their capped caseload which should not exceed 16 cases (individual children, not families) at any point during the course of the ASYE. Caseloads will be regularly reviewed by the PCFSW and Strategic Leadership Team;
- Escalate any breach in their caseloads exceeding the capped amount, to the PCFSW; where the ASYE Lead and Manager have offered no resolution after two weeks of them reporting the breach.

# Quality Assurance

The aim of this policy is to ensure we are working to a quality standard and providing the conditions to support NQSWs to develop knowledge, skills, capability and resilience in order to become robust and confident practitioners.

The Stoke-on-Trent City Council ASYE will include the following as a minimum expected standard:

- An Induction period for NQSW completing the ASYE;
- A programme of Professional Learning and Development that is mapped to the Post Qualifying Knowledge and Skills statements and promotes critical learning and reflection;
- Access to Care Knowledge to support evidence based and research minded practice;
- Coaching and Mentoring from ASYE Coordinator;
- A post that is appropriate to this early stage of their professional development which will provide them with sufficient learning opportunities to meet the requirements of the KSS for Child and Family Practitioners. Specialist teams such as Early Help and Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) do not offer the range of KSS-specific opportunities for NQSW's to demonstrate capability and are therefore unsuitable for NQSW's completing the ASYE;
- An Individual Learning Agreement including agreement of supervision frequency (see Supervision Policy and additional needs of NQSW);
- A Learning Agreement/Professional Development Plan within the first month of employment as a registered Social Worker;
- A caseload not exceeding 16 cases, managed and supported appropriate to the NQSW's development needs;
- Completion of three Direct Observations;
- Reviews of the Individual Learning Agreement at the three-, six-, nine- and eleven-month reviews (and subsequent reviews at three monthly intervals for part time workers);
- Completed Portfolio which maps work completed to the Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) and PCF.