Scenarios: Sufficiency, range and complexity of work in voluntary organisations

In their final portfolios, NQSWs in the voluntary sector produced a range of evidence taken from their experience of complex and challenging casework. In order to demonstrate this range of work, a number of short scenarios are shown below. Each scenario shows how newly qualified social workers can meet the requirements of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) at ASYE.

Of course they would not be able to demonstrate capability in the ASYE within one piece of work because assessment is no longer a 'snapshot' of a competence demonstrated at a point in time, it is a demonstration of progressive development over the year, culminating in evidence of consistently reaching the standard required. The examples given here could however contribute to building a holistic assessment over the period of the year.

All of the organisations are small voluntary sector employers and the scenarios provide an overview of the role and responsibilities of newly qualified social workers and the level of work undertaken in terms of complexity, risk assessment and autonomy.

1. Domestic violence service
Rosie is a newly qualified social worker employed as a support worker in a Women's Aid Project. Rosie was given responsibility for a referral from a local drugs service for a client looking to get away from an abusive relationship.

Rosie's initial assessment established that this individual had a past history of heroin addiction and was now on a high dosage of methadone. She was also aware that if this individual left her current partner, it may have implications for her immigration status.

In terms of her professional priorities, Rosie's assessment of the situation established the following areas of intervention to support the individual by accessing accommodation and work to stabilise her immigration status.

Two local refuges would not accept this individual due to her methadone programme so Rosie made contact with a local housing provider to secure temporary accommodation. She also accompanied her to see a local solicitor to obtain legal advice on applying for 'Indefinite leave to remain' and this process was set in motion. Rosie's engagement with the individual using this service ended after she had secured permanent accommodation and was accessing support from a local drugs project.
“....based on Rosie's case notes, it was clear that she had followed the service's procedures and that she maintained a supportive and professional relationship with the individual, and worked effectively with other professionals” (Supervisor)

“Sometimes, I find it difficult to explain to people who use services that I cannot always provide an immediate solution, but through supervision I am beginning to see that there are boundaries to what I can and cannot do. I have a better sense of the importance of working with other agencies to find solutions and of being able to present information and evidence in a professional manner.” (Rosie)

“Rosie ensured that this individual found the right support and engaged confidently and assertively with other agencies” (Manager)

2. Women offenders support service
Alisha is a newly qualified social worker employed in service which works with women offenders, most of whom reach the service via a mandatory referral from court.

Alisha was assigned a referral from the local Magistrates court for an individual who had a long term history of theft and shoplifting. This individual also had a past history of substance misuse.

Alisha worked with the client over ten mandatory sessions using an interpreter as the client was a non-English speaking. Alisha acknowledged the importance of non-verbal communication and used eco-maps, drawings and diagrams to increase their understanding. One month after Alisha’s mandatory engagement with this individual ended, she was accessing a drug support unit, receiving medical care and living independently whilst maintaining contact with her daughter and granddaughter.

“Alisha used good communication skills in the context. She achieved clarity and engagement with this individual in a non-judgemental and sympathetic manner.” (Supervisor)

“Alisha demonstrated very good grounding of anti-oppressive practice and social work values and principles.” (Supervisor)

“Alisha made sure that personal values did not impinge on her interventions.” (Supervisor)

3. Domestic violence outreach service
Jenny is a newly qualified social worker employed as a Project Worker in domestic violence outreach service.

As part of her work, Jenny set up and ran a new support group for people who use services, aimed at using social activities to rebuild self-confidence and self-esteem. The group consisted of women from traveller communities, several women used English as a second language and one individual who was blind. The past experiences of this group of people had led many to become socially isolated, distrustful of others and lead to difficulties in establishing relationships and friendships with other people. Using her knowledge of therapeutic interventions with victims of domestic abuse, Jenny developed a programme of inclusive activities in which everyone could participate. Jenny’s work reflected her ‘understanding of forms
of harm and their impact on people and the implications for practice, drawing on concepts of strength, resilience, vulnerability, risk and resistance, and their application to practice' (PCF Domain 5 - Knowledge)

She devised a range of creative activities many of which encouraged co-operative working between clients.

- "Jenny’s value base stood out very clearly in this setting, she interacted very easily with a number of women from a range of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds....Jenny’s presence contributed to a positive, inclusive group session" (Supervisor)

4. Community based mental health service
Dave is a newly qualified social worker who is employed in a social work role in a community-based mental health service.

Dave carried out a referral of a middle aged male with a Black British heritage. This individual had complex mental health problems and a long history of non-engagement with services. Dave undertook an assessment of this person’s needs including their ability to meet their own self-care requirements.

Following the assessment, one of Dave's immediate priorities was to ensure the individual was maximising their income potential and he arranged for them to attend an advice centre for additional benefits advice. Subsequently, the individual was awarded Disability Living Allowance.

Given this individual's reluctance to engage with services, Dave determined that it was important to explain to him his rights to refuse some services within the existing legislative frameworks but Dave also made clear the statutory grounds for some interventions. Following a review meeting with the client, Dave contacted the local authority care co-ordinator and agreed to develop a Self-Directed Support plan to meet the needs of the service user including costing the proposed services.

- "Throughout the assessment and review process, Dave used a person-centred approach and was able to recognise and respect the individual's cultural and religious beliefs....Dave was able to build on this individual's strengths....and he was able to promote their right to choice within the legislative framework.... this empowered the individual by giving him shared control in making informed decisions" (Supervisor)

5. Women offenders Scenario A
Alisha worked with an individual who had been trafficked into the country for sexual purposes. They had been considered at risk by multiple agencies but refused to enter any public protection programme. The individual was in an abusive relationship with a man who she viewed as a 'father' figure and had no access to public funds.

Using the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the NQSW referred this individual to the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC). As a result of this, she was recognised as a victim of trafficking and was able to claim benefits.
Using her knowledge of the social, psychological and cultural perspectives on domestic violence, Alisha worked with this individual over a period of several months. This work was informed by the document 'The Power to Change', which is a collaborative resource between Women's Aid, NANE in Hungary, Associazione Artemisi in Italy, MTÜ Naiste Varjupaik in Estonia and Associacao de Mulheres Contra a Violencia in Portugal.

Following this period of support, the individual left the abusive relationship, maintained a tenancy with a housing association, managed a budget and promoted their own self-care.

- "....through this piece of work, Alisha demonstrated an ability to manage and co-ordinate interventions by different organisations and to use her own knowledge of social work theory and practice to inform and engage with this individual throughout" (Supervisor)

6. Women offenders Scenario B
During the course of working with one individual, Alisha became concerned about the client's low mood, criminal behaviour and cannabis use and how this might be impacting on the care of her children. In one session, serious concerns were raised and Alisha explained to the individual that a referral to children's services would be made. Alisha made a telephone referral followed up by a written referral. Subsequently, the children were assessed as children in need and Alisha supported the individual through the process of developing a multi-agency family support plan. Throughout this process, Alisha recorded and shared information in line with safeguarding procedures and other legislative frameworks.

- "....in handling a sensitive and challenging situation, Alisha demonstrated a sound knowledge of information sharing protocols, the need for a clear course of action whilst remaining supportive of this individual and their family" (Supervisor)
- "Alisha is empathetic, non-judgemental and promotes the rights of people who use services to make autonomous decisions but understands the requirement for statutory interventions in some circumstances...." (Supervisor)

7. Mental health
This individual had been sectioned under the Mental Health Act while they were being treated in hospital for another condition. Dave was involved in a review of their needs with health professionals, a social worker and the Care Co-ordinator for this individual.

Within in this review, Dave felt that his responsibility to this individual was to ensure her safety but also to promote her independence by arranging for her to re-enter community based services once it was deemed safe to do so. She had successfully managed a tenancy within a sheltered complex for many years and was able to meet her own self-care needs with support. In collaboration with medical and social care staff, Dave took the lead in developing a support package to enable the her to return home. He also provided for additional support by arranging for the her to attend a local day care service for people with enduring mental health problems.
“....working with other agencies and undertaking multi-agency assessments is central to their role...Dave works closely with statutory agencies which gives him a range of diverse experiences” (Supervisor)

“ Dave has developed an extensive knowledge of contacts and has used this knowledge to signpost service users to other services and agencies in the area....” (Manager)

8. Demonstration of Professional Leadership

PCF Domain 9 'professional leadership' suggests that social workers at the ASYE level will 'take steps to enable and develop the learning of others' and to 'show capacity for leading practice'

In all cases, newly-qualified social workers, in the settings outlined above, have contributed to training and development in their organisations as well as providing a lead in introducing new areas of service provision:

- **Domestic Violence**
  Rosie introduced and delivered the Freedom Programme over a twelve week period to 22 women and conducted an evaluation with people who use services. 
  "Rosie has a progressive outlook and constantly develops strategies and services which add to the efficiency of the service in which they are working" (Supervisor)

- **Mental Health**
  Dave facilitated practice teaching sessions and developed a new evaluation form for social work students which was used to improve practice learning provision within the organisation

  "I have seen that Dave's confidence has increased as he now facilitates practice teaching sessions and also contributes proactively in team meetings...he has a quality of building positive working relationships” (Supervisor)