

Case study Anya

Anya is a newly qualified social worker employed as a support worker in a voluntary sector domestic abuse service (NEDAS). She is based in a women's refuge and provides outreach support beyond the refuge. The post provides a variety of experience as Anya works with people in immediate crisis and over a longer timescale which creates a diverse range and complexity of work.

NEDAS is a member of a local partnership with other private and voluntary sector employers. The partnership provides access to support and training linked to the ASYE for member agencies.

Anya's line manager in the refuge (Marian) has many years' experience of working in domestic violence services. She is not a registered social worker. The local partnership has a contract with Laura who is a registered social worker. Laura is responsible for the assessment of newly qualified workers completing their ASYE in the partnership.

Anya, Marian and Laura arranged to meet together at the refuge to complete a **Learning agreement**.

Four key issues created particular discussion in the learning agreement meeting:

1. Confidentiality

Marian was particularly concerned about how confidentiality would be managed in the arrangements for supervision, direct observations and the sharing of work products since Laura is from outside the agency. It was agreed that Laura would adhere to the confidentiality policy of NEDAS in all of her work with Anya. It was also agreed that actual work products would not be included in the folder of evidence but that these would be shared with Laura and that both Laura and Marian would comment on the quality of Anya's work products in their reports. It was also agreed that Anya would complete a commentary and a reflection on each work product which would be included in the folder for submission.

Anya brought an assessment form to the first supervision session with Laura. Laura felt that this was very procedural and lacked evidence of Anya's ability to analyse information to complete a good quality assessment. Anya acknowledged what Laura was saying and agreed to reflect on this for the next supervision. Anya brought a reflective account to the next supervision along with a revised outcomes ladder.

2. Supervision

The Standards for Employers and supervision framework were discussed in the meeting. It was agreed that the requirements for supervision would be met in a range

of ways, drawing on Anya's needs and the supervision opportunities available, as detailed in the learning agreement.

This flexible approach to meeting the supervision requirements worked very effectively as the year progressed.

While the supervisions with Laura and Marian were separate from each other, Anya found that discussions in one session would influence what she took to the other session for discussion. For example, in one of her supervisions with Marian, Anya talked about feeling that there was a lack of space for analysis from the worker about the information gathered on initial assessments in the service. Marian was interested in what Anya had to say and so Anya shared the evidence she had developed around this in her supervision with Marian. Marian found the discussion interesting and said she felt it would be useful to have analysis included on the actual assessment forms. This led to discussions at the next team meeting and ultimately led to some changes in assessment practice in the service.

3. Feedback from people being supported

Laura raised the centrality of feedback for the ASYE from people being supported and asked for Anya's and Marian's thoughts about this. Marian said that NEDAS has an evaluation form which they ask women leaving the refuge to complete and another evaluation form which people receiving outreach support complete annually. These are an agency requirement and feed into the service annual report. It was agreed that this might provide some feedback on Anya's practice from people being supported, although it was felt that the comments were more likely to relate to service delivery rather than Anya's actual practice. Anya suggested that she could use a feedback form which she had used on her final placement as she thought that this had been a useful pro-forma. Laura suggested that a pro-forma might not be sufficiently flexible to obtain feedback from the variety of people Anya worked with. Laura pointed out that since Anya is responsible for two family rooms in the refuge she should be seeking feedback from both the women and their children and that this might need different approaches. Laura suggested that Anya look at the principles for evidencing feedback from people being supported, and from carers to put more thought into the most appropriate ways to obtain people's feedback both formally and informally.

It was agreed that Anya could then develop a feedback plan which could also include a plan about gathering feedback from other professionals, and that this plan would be included in Anya's folder of evidence. Laura said that it was vital that Anya reflected on the feedback she obtained and what she had learnt from this.

In the first few weeks of the assessed and supported year Anya developed a feedback plan that was effective in giving her regular feedback. In preparation for the six month review Anya prepared a short reflection on the feedback process and the feedback she had been given.

4. Professional development

Anya raised concerns about whether she could demonstrate her work against the PCF and demonstrate progression as a social worker while employed in a support worker role. Laura made clear that the PCF is a professional rather than an

occupational framework and advised that in their supervision Anya would have the opportunity to reflect on and critically analyse her social work practice. It was agreed that these sessions would provide an opportunity for Anya to discuss evidence of her practice in relation to the PCF and explore her progress and the assessment of her assessed and supported year.

Laura also said that she was aware that Anya completed a very comprehensive personal development plan (PDP) as part of her final assignment at university and she has updated this in relation to her current post at NEDAS. In supervision, Laura would be able to use the PDP to review and monitor Anya's professional development and to focus on any specific learning and development objectives.

As the year progressed, Laura became concerned that although Anya was providing evidence of her work against the PCF and she was clearly progressing in her role, Anya remained unclear about her professional identity and development as a social worker. In the next supervision session Laura asked Anya to complete a reflective account about her development as a social worker, focusing on what she felt she brought to her practice as a result of her social work status. Laura suggested that Anya look at the international definition of social work to prepare for this reflection.

Anya brought a reflective account of professional development to the next supervision. As she discussed this with Laura she reflected on how this exercise had helped to strengthen her professional identity and reinforce her commitment to social work. She reflected that prior to this exercise she had seen social work as limited to local authority work and that this exercise had helped her to consider it more widely.