

Guidance on managing the NQSW's workload to support progressive development

The responsibility of the employer

The College of Social Work has developed a national system for validating ASYE schemes. One of the criteria for validation is that:

“Newly qualified social workers undertaking their ASYE are given a protected and reduced workload to enable time for learning and development, in line with revised Standards for Employers.

This should show how your ASYE enables the NQSW to have protected development time, a managed workload, tailored supervision and personal development time”.

While most assessors and NQSWs manage this between themselves, effective workload management, tailored supervision, and protected development time are organisation wide issues for which the employer is ultimately responsible.

It is important that this is acknowledged and acted upon by the employer in order to enable the organisation to provide evidence for the national validation process, and for transparency in the event of a complaint by the NQSW.

The Social Work Taskforce identified areas to be addressed so that social workers at all levels are able to function effectively in their roles. This is outlined in standard three of [The Standards for Employers](#) of Social Workers in England.

The [Social Work Health Check](#) is linked to the Standards for Employers and provides an important barometer of workflow and barriers to effective practice. It is a framework of 39 steps to stimulate debate and ideas and employers are encouraged to undertake this check on a regular basis.

[Click here](#) for more information about the roles and responsibilities of the employer.

The responsibility of the assessor

However experienced they may be at the start of the ASYE, over the course of the year the NQSW is required to generate evidence of their ability to manage an increasingly complex workload.

The complexity of a caseload will reflect the individual's growing level of proficiency and autonomous practice. It will also reflect the level of risk that is being managed by the NQSW.

Decisions about workload and the allocation of work need to reflect this requirement, with more allowance being given at the beginning of the year than at the end.

The expectation is that this process will be managed by the assessor (with the line manager if different) and the NQSW through discussion in supervision and at review points. The outcomes of these discussions should be clearly recorded in supervision notes and the record of support and progressive assessment.

It is recommended that 10% of the NQSW's time should be set aside for undertaking learning and development activities.

Different arrangements for managing this and include:

- a half day a week
- one day a fortnight
- two days per month.

Whatever is agreed, the detail should be recorded in the record of support and progressive assessment at the beginning of the ASYE.

To ensure transparency and consistency between NQSWs in one organisation, it is advised that the relevant sections are pre-populated by the ASYE lead person. If this does not happen, the assessor should check what organisational agreements are in place. This will be especially important if problems emerge over the course of the ASYE, which may result in a fail outcome or if a complaint is made by the NQSW.

Within these perimeters, professional development activities should be tailored to the needs of the NQSW. They may include formal training, learning with peers through group supervision or action learning, shadowing and visits to other services and independent reading and research activities. Activities should be recorded and reflected upon in the professional development plan, within the critical reflection log.