

National moderation panel – October 2017

Key messages

1. National moderation panel membership

The ASYE adult national moderation panel had its sixth meeting on 17 October 2017. It performs a key quality assurance role in the Department of Health's objective to ensure that all NQSWs undertaking ASYE achieve a consistent level of capability by the end of their first year in practice.

Details of the current panel's membership are included within the [Terms of Reference](#) for the national moderation panel.

A small number of panel members step down periodically to ensure both stability, variation and accurate representation of the social work sector; the majority of panel members at any time having experienced two or more panels.

Two of the panel's founding members, Paula Hallam from Hampshire and Meg Niven from Somerset are leaving the panel and Skills for Care will be looking to recruit new panel members from the South East and South West in the next few months. The recruitment process will be advertised in the [social work briefing](#). We would like to thank Paula and Meg for their excellent contributions and commitment to the panel beyond the call of duty.

2. Requesting evidence

The panel would like to express thanks to all employers and Chairs of External Moderation Panels who responded to the request to submit evidence for the October panel. The panel's terms of reference stipulate that it should moderate 5% of evidence from the total number of NQSWs within a specified period. This is usually the number of NQSWs who from their registration details were due to complete ASYE within the six months' period before the panel. Evidence requested and reviewed was as follows:

	Evidence sets requested	Repeat evidence sets requested	Non-compliant (no response despite numerous reminders)	External moderation summary reports requested	External moderation summary reports received
October 2017	24	2	4	29	16

We start requesting evidence at least two months' in advance of the panel to give employers time to collate and submit the documentation. Some employers respond in good time but unfortunately we have a significant number who send in evidence late or in some instances not at all despite several reminders. On these occasions we will contact employers in line with our promoting consistency and compliance procedures (please see appendix).

The knowledge and skills statement (adults) sets out the level and requirements to embed ASYE and provides funding to help employers with this process. As the agency responsible for dispersing DH funds, we are required to ensure that any grants are utilised for this intended purpose. Our approach is always to offer support and assistance to understand the factors which may have prevented the employer from submitting evidence. We do reserve the right to withhold funding if we consider that employers are not adhering to the knowledge and skills statement (KSS) despite our advice and support.

3. Promoting consistency within the national moderation panel

The panel regularly includes peer moderation and development exercises to promote consistency in our assessments and the feedback we provide to employers and partnerships. This time we focussed on direct observation and the rating (good, satisfactory, poor) each panel member gives to the evidence they review.

The following themes were identified from the **direct observation moderation exercise**:

- Panel members were concerned about the absence of links between direct observations (DOs) and progress throughout ASYE.
- NQSW comments in the direct observation template were too descriptive and focused on procedure rather than social work methods, theories or implementation of a legal framework.
- One of the evidence sets we moderated involved three different observers. The panel recommends that the first and last observation should be conducted by the principal assessor. The direct observation reports taken as a whole should demonstrate any progress made by the NQSW over the course of ASYE with an indication that any learning and development needs identified in the first observation have been addressed by the last observation.
- The observations should be spread over the 12 months not condensed into a short period e.g. three or four months.
- The direct observations paid little attention to service user feedback.

4. What is a good, satisfactory or poor assessment?

The panel produced the following guidance criteria to support members rate each set of evidence consistently. This evidence criteria relates to the assessor's report and recommendation, it is not a rating of what the panel would expect to see from a good NQSW candidate. Therefore, you could have a good assessor report but a failed NQSW.

These ratings will enable the panel to record and monitor the quality of assessor reports over a number of years. External moderation panels may also find the

assessment ratings helpful in determining the overall quality of assessor reports within their partnership.

A **good** assessor report will contain the following:

1. Correlation between evidence of progression in the critical reflection log (CRL) and the assessor's progressive assessment (interims and final).
2. Portfolio documentation is complete (including the internal moderation summary report and reviewer report) and detailed with all sections included and dates and signatures provided, it should meet the documentary standards including anonymization.
3. The assessor references well in each of their progressive assessments and in their final assessments, the evidence of progression e.g. CRLs, DOs
4. KSS and Professional Capability Framework (PCF) language is used - using the language of KSS and PCF to link to the evidence.
5. The report is holistic in nature with evidence triangulated.
6. The assessor demonstrates a good standard of writing style (i.e. clear, concise, good English grammar).
7. There is evidence of progressive development across the year (DOs and CRLs should show the NQSW's development - note the importance of planning for this) and it should provide a sense of the NQSW's journey throughout ASYE. It should be clear what the NQSW has been doing, why they are practising in this manner with links to a legal, theoretical and value-based framework.
8. The evidence of progression should be timed and produced within their respective review periods e.g. not all bunched at the end of the year.
9. The assessor's final report should show that the NQSW has demonstrated holistic practice capability i.e. procedural competence combining with meta-competence (see appendix to produce sound decision-making and practice).

An **average** assessor report will contain the following:

1. All documents present and anonymised and the documentary standards are met.
2. Evidence of progression is present although there is scope for more clarity e.g. more explicit reference to the level at which the NQSW is practising.
3. There is some correlation between the evidence of progression from the NQSW and the assessor's judgement. However there is scope for the CRL and the RSPA to mirror each other more fully.
4. The assessor's report is largely holistic in nature.
5. The evidence of progression mostly falls within the respective review periods.
6. There is some referencing of the evidence of progression in the CRLs and the assessor's reports.
7. The assessor's standard of writing style is of an acceptable level.

A **poor** assessor report will contain the following:

1. There is an over reliance on the NQSW to provide the portfolio evidence or on the assessor.

2. The KSS and PCF is listed rather than linked.
3. The report is poorly written.
4. The portfolio is incomplete.

The national panel used this assessment criteria to rate the evidence submitted to the October panel. We had three good, 12 average and five poor evidence sets.

5. Themes emerging from NQSW evidence reviews

Ensuring confidentiality

The vast majority of NQSW portfolios are anonymised and do not include confidential information. In order to provide additional clarity, the panel recommends that the following information within individual NQSW evidence is anonymised before it is submitted for both external and national moderation:

- service users – please use either a fictitious name or one initial to ensure that the service user cannot be identified
- organisations, locations or places, this includes residential care homes or hospitals.

It is acceptable to retain the names of NQSWs or relevant professionals (e.g. assessor, line manager and observers) within the documentation presented for moderation. We advise that the internal moderation process should view breaches of confidentiality, with names not being anonymised, extremely seriously as it reflects on the professionalism of the NQSW and/or the assessor. In some instances an internal moderation process may see a breach of confidentiality as warranting a 'fail' outcome.

Many partnerships are requiring all members of the external moderation process to complete a confidentiality agreement, the regulated professionals workforce team, adultasye@skillsforcare.org.uk, can provide a template on request.

6. ASYE evidence

Assessors can refer within their reports to evidence generated from the ASYE process. This can include evidence which may not be included within either the record of support and progressive assessment or the critical reflection log such as supervision notes. An internal moderation panel may request this evidence if necessary to inform their final assessment judgement. Assessors or internal moderation panels may not, however, introduce evidence or personal knowledge gleaned from outside the ASYE process.

Gathering feedback

The panel was concerned though that service user feedback was often missing and therefore quite often the service user voice was absent. They considered that it was possible to gather feedback in many circumstances through consideration of human rights and obtaining suitable permissions.

It is not essential to use the form provided for feedback from other professionals but any feedback provided should be structured and specific as detailed in the template.

Support for the NQSW

The panel reviewed a significant number of evidence sets where the frequency of supervision was not in line with the KSS guidance. In addition, there was an emerging theme of NQSWs being stressed. Again, although there were some very good examples of excellent support provided to NQSWs we would like to urge all employers to ensure that NQSWs have both regular professional support and adequate allowances for workload and professional development. These need to be detailed within the documentation.

Over the last few national moderation panels it has been very evident that weaker candidates can demonstrate significant progress with a strong and capable assessor. At the same time it has been apparent that where a weaker candidate has an inexperienced or poor assessor the outcome is not helpful for either party.

General comments

The panel considered that it might be helpful to clarify that progression is more than doing more complex work and taking a greater number of cases. Progression is demonstrated when the NQSW is able to reflect more deeply and evidence their progression through learning and acting on previous feedback.

Please note that both internal moderation summary reports and the individual reviewer reports need to be included in the evidence submitted to Skills for Care.

Principal social workers (PSWs) play a vital role in overseeing ASYE and, in future, we will include PSWs in any correspondence requesting evidence for the national panel.

Following a recent agreement between the Department of Health, Daisy Bogg Associates and Skills for Care, ASYE certificates issued since September/October 2017 now reflect an employer's adherence to quality assurance requirements for internal, external and national moderation.

This statement will be absent from certificates where employers have not registered with Skills for Care and compliance with the KSS requirements cannot be verified.

7. External moderation reports

External moderation is a key component of ASYE. It provides employer support, challenge and scrutiny and is vital for promoting national consistency in employer assessment judgements. We ask each external moderation partnership to submit reports from each moderation process since the last national panel. This enables the panel to develop a national picture of ASYE and collate data relating to incompletions, fails and referrals to HCPC.

Overtime we will be able to identify trends and areas for future development. This can only be achieved if the national panel receives and reviews external moderation summary reports from all of the 29 partnerships. Unfortunately, the October panel

only received summary reports from half of the partnerships and the vast majority of these had used the old template. We will be liaising with all those who did not submit a report to find out why that was the case and to ensure we have the correct contact information. Again our approach is always to offer support and advice but failure to respond or to act on guidance provided could result in the withdrawal of ASYE funding to all organisations involved in the partnership.

The October panel did receive some very good external moderation summary reports. These offered detailed and constructive feedback to employers and assessors as well as providing the necessary data for the national overview. We will be liaising with these partnerships to see if they are willing to share their reports as good practice examples. Some well-established ASYE moderation partnerships have provided support or buddying to those less experienced, these are to be encouraged.

8. Memorandum of collaboration/co-operation

The national panel intends to review all memoranda within the next year to offer support to partnerships and in acknowledgement of the fluid nature of social work and teaching partnerships.

Appendix

Compliance and promoting consistency

Employers are reminded that they need to adhere to the process for promoting national consistency of employer assessment outlined in the Chief Social Worker's knowledge and skills statement. The national moderation panel agreed that Skills for Care need to be transparent in their approach to supporting employers adhere to the KSS and also in the steps they will take when employers are not complying. The panel agreed that a four – step process will be followed in the case of non-compliance. This involves:

Stage	Response
Pre – panel	Email to request evidence again or ask for reasons why it is not available.
Post - panel	Formal letter to ASYE lead and Principal Social Worker from panel stating KSS requirements and asking for response within given timescales as to why evidence was not submitted and whether support is needed to comply with KSS.
Review response (if provided)	Consider whether response is reasonable, explore options for support if requested and agree formal, final response.
Final response – (with copy to Director if funding is to be withdrawn)	Letter confirming response which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ accepting reasons provided for non-submission▪ providing support and guidance▪ withdrawal of second stage funding. With all of the above ensure organisation is asked to submit evidence to panel again at earliest possible opportunity.