

National moderation panel – March 2018

1. National moderation panel composition update

The ASYE adult moderation panel held its 7th meeting on 20 March 2018

At the panel's meeting on 20 March welcomed Tim Nicholls from Cumbria County Council as its appointed chair.

The NMP has been running for more than 2 years and it is now better embedded in employer processes. Given this, the National Moderation Panel is looking to see the Programme further improve standards of practice of NQSWs as evidenced in submitted portfolios.

The panel also welcomed four new panel members:

- Suzie Cooper from Newcastle City Council, in her absence
- Wendy Lloyd from Cornwall County Council
- Paul Richards from Croydon County Council
- Dawn Scully from Surrey County Council

2. Requesting evidence

The panel would like express thanks to all employers and Chairs of External Moderation Panels for the noted improvement in the return rate of candidate evidence presented to the March panel which currently stands at 92%. The panel will continue to moderate 5% of the evidence from the total number of NQSWs who, from their registration details, are 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
March 2018	25	2	2	22	17

The panel has continued to review evidence which identifies variations in the integration of the KSS in the ASYE support and assessment approach implemented by employers. Our response 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 however 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.

At the meeting in March, the panel reviewed a sample of anonymised “real” evidence sets produced by candidates in the first three months of the ASYE programme. The purpose of the exercise was to agree the moderation level of the evidence and lead the further development of the exemplars as learning resources for assessors in support of their work with NQSWs during the first three months of their ASYE learning journey.

There was agreement that the exemplars met the moderation level of 0 to 3 months on the ASYE programme. There was further consensus that each exemplar would need to be amended to reflect the comments made by panel members and include explanatory notes within the body of the document to make into a set of useful resources for assessors.

The panel agreed that the exemplars reviewed will be amended and further developed. Employers will be notified of the outcome of this work in due course via our local communication channels and the Skills for Care website. It is hoped that the set of resources will offer a starting point to enhance the professional development of assessors.

Themes emerging from NQSW evidence reviews

The themes emerging from the meeting were:

1. ensuring confidentiality;
2. documentary standards and submission of evidence to the panel;
3. support and Assessment Agreement and timing of the three monthly review;
4. consent from service users for direct observations;
5. use of personal development planning;
6. use of standardisation processes in supporting NQSWs with organisational issues.

1. Ensuring confidentiality

As outlined in previous key messages briefings, the vast majority of NQSW portfolios are anonymised and do not include confidential information. However, issues with confidentiality were again identified at this panel meeting with one set of evidence reviewed including details which constituted a data breach.

Employers are requested to review their internal processes of compliance with confidentiality as a matter of urgency and ensure that such practices are standardised across all teams involved in the delivery of the ASYE. Guidance on confidentiality is provided [here](#). Further guidance and support is also available from the Regulated Professional Workforce Team at Skills for Care and at <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/The-ASYE-adults/Moderation.aspx>

The panel will continue to offer a collaborative and supportive approach to employers about compliance with confidentiality. However, as there remain on-going concerns, the panel will also now take assertive action to address future lack of compliance with maintaining confidentiality and data breaches. Please note that some breaches may warrant the Panel to report directly to the relevant Director of Adult Social Care and the Local Authority Senior Information Risk Owner for internal organisational follow up action.

2. Documentary standards and submission of evidence to the panel

The majority of the evidence reviewed by the panel did not meet the required documentary standards. There were identified issues with omission of dates and signatures.

There were significant variations in the templates used, with some evidence being submitted on forms that are no longer in use. There was also added difficulty for the panel

with reviewing evidence that was submitted using employers' internal forms as these did not provide scope for reviewing how the KSS were being met. Additionally, some of the evidence submitted included draft documents or part completed documents rather than final versions.

Overall, the panel concluded that the current documentary standards of evidence submitted is beginning to affect the process of moderation. The poor standard of pieces of evidence is detracting from the developmental focus of the panel as time has to be spent on reconciling evidence in different formats. Issues of documentary standards also need to be addressed for compliance purposes. We want to support employers in meeting these standards in the submission of their portfolios and will be producing a short guide on how to present your evidence to the National Moderation Panel. We anticipate that this will improve the documentary standards of portfolios, however we will keep this under review and recognise that further action may be needed.

3. Support and Assessment Agreement and timing of the three monthly review

The evidence reviewed identified a lack of alignment in the timing between the candidate's registration and the completion of the Support and Assessment Agreement, (Part 1 RSPA), resulting in registration occurring after the start of the ASYE Programme. This meant that support for the NQSWs was not consistently and adequately provided under the Programme of the first three months of the ASYE.

The panel would like to encourage employers to ensure that the support and assessment arrangements are put in place in a timely manner so that there is no compression of time between the start of the ASYE programme and the three monthly review. This in turns provides an opportunity for the employer, internal and external moderation colleagues to undertake a meaningful assessment of support provided to the NQSW the first stage of review and its links to progression and professional development needs.

4. Consent from service users for direct observations

The review of the Direct Observation evidence raised a concern that candidates are omitting to explore potential issues of mental capacity related to permission to undertake the Observation'.

The panel felt that capacity issues and consent need to be full considered and addressed at the planning stage for the direct observations. In the absence of its consideration, observations run the risk of not following the principles of good practice.

5. The use of personal development planning

The panel reviewed a number of personal development plans. While some had been completed to a good standard, most appear to have been drafted as standalone documents, generic in nature and carrying forward the same development needs through each review period of the Programme. Completed in this way, they do not serve their intended purpose: to drive the focus of the learning and development in each review period. This means that developmental needs identified in the holistic assessment process in one review period should be incorporated into the PDP for the next review period with the impact of this learning process on practice subsequently reviewed.

The panel would like to guide employers to review its current approach to personal development planning and re-focus this activity to ensure that it drives the assessment process.

6. The use of standardisation processes in supporting NQSWs with organisational issues

A high number of evidence sets included information about organisational issues that impacted on the NWSQ's experience and, in some cases, had implications for progression and completion of the ASYE. One set of evidence reviewed provided evidence of the impact on an NQSW of the lack of standardised assessment practice resulting from a change of assessor.

There was recognition by the panel of the challenges faced by employers in respect of staffing delivering the ASYE – whether as line managers or assessors. However, the panel also felt that employers would benefit from undertaking a review of their current practices and, where there are gaps, introduce standardised processes that ensure that changes of staff do not impact on the quality of the ASYE learning, support and assessment practices provided. An example of this would be a review of handover arrangements between staff delivering ASYE when there is a change of personnel. Standardisation of assessment practice needs to consider the need for employers to retain evidence from ASYE candidates for 12 months from the date of the internal moderation panel.

Moving towards best practice with evidence for moderation

Gathering feedback

The evidence in relation to service user feedback was patchy. This may be indicative of a lack of integral focus on the voice of service users and their carers as part of the holistic assessment process.

Many of the evidence sets reviewed did not maximise the developmental value of feedback from professionals. Feedback of observations by assessors and line managers

was often not aligned to the areas of practice outcome identified by the NQSW as areas they would like to develop through that process. In addition, most of this evidence did not meet best practice standards.

The sampled professional feedback evidence from non-social work professionals was deemed to be of limited developmental value due its generic content and lack of adherence to ASYE programme guidance.

Support for the NQSW

A significant number of evidence sets reviewed by the panel highlighted that the frequency of supervision was not in line with the KSS Programme's guidance. In addition, some NQSWs described accessing ad hoc case discussions meetings in lieu of formal reflective supervision linked to ASYE learning and this practice being recorded as "*informal supervision*".

The evidence reviewed identified an increase in organisational issues impacting on the experience of NQSWs in a range of settings linked to the fluid nature of social work and the current challenges of delivering services in the adult social care sector. A rising number of NQSWs described experiencing changes due to service redesigning and restructuring, and changes of line manager and/or assessor. Whilst there was clear evidence of mitigating action undertaken by employers, the impact on NQSWs of delays or issues with transition was at times far reaching and affected level of progression and ASYE completion outcomes.

The panel identified that, given the changing employment landscape for NQSWs, ASYE candidates need to ensure that they plan for changes in role, employer and assessor and reduce the risk of loss of evidence by ensuring that they retain a set of evidence at all times and for a period of 12 months after completion.

Overall, the level of support provided to the NQSWs ranged from good practice to below the required standard. There was clear evidence of the link between the relationship between the assessor and the candidate and the experience of the NQSW and level of capability achieved on completion of the ASYE.

External moderation reports

We are continuing to identify trends and areas for future development. This can only be sustained if the national panel receives and reviews external moderation summary reports from all of the 29 partnerships.

The evidence submitted for external moderation activity to the panel was of variable quality and level of completeness. It is very positive that 17 external moderation summary reports were received which is an improvement in the return rate. The panel 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. The ethos of our approach remains 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 March 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 seek to maximise the use of good practice identified from this process to drive up standards in the external moderation process.

To support the improvement of External Moderation Panel Reports we would encourage the following: the provision of detailed information to support transparency in decision making and, of particular importance, the regular practice of ensuring that an action plan is completed at each meeting. Skills for Care will include exemplars on their website in the future.