



Department
for Education



Resource 2: Feedback from people who need care and support - guidance for newly qualified social workers

This resource provides introductory information for newly qualified workers. It outlines the importance of taking a critically reflective and individualised approach to seeking and using feedback.

KEY POINTS

- Feedback can be both formal and informal. That is, it may be solicited or unsolicited.
- In recognition of the individual needs and circumstances of the people that social workers work with, feedback approaches should be individualised taking into account people's individual needs and circumstances.
- All practitioners need to consider how they can develop their skills in seeking and using feedback from people who need care and support.
- Obtaining feedback is only one aspect of the process of using feedback. NQSWs need to reflect on the feedback obtained, what they have learnt from the process and the outcome and how they will draw on the feedback to improve their practice.
- Discussions about feedback should take place at all stages of the ASYE.
- All evidence considered as part of the ASYE should be discussed in the context of feedback from people being supported.
- People who receive care and support have a central role to play in assessing NQSWs. This role is only respected where feedback is sensitively generated and reflected on.
- Reflective supervision should contain discussion about feedback from people who need care and support.

Obtaining feedback and using feedback needs a critically reflective approach. There is no single way in which social workers should seek feedback from people who need care and support and how you will gather feedback will depend very much on the people you work with and the context of your practice. The agency or setting in which you are working, and its culture in terms of feedback from people being supported, and their carers, will also impact on how such feedback is incorporated into practice.

Your ability to receive and use feedback is also vitally important. [Resource five](#) will be particularly helpful for you in considering the way in which you will approach seeking and receiving feedback on your practice.

In gathering feedback from people who need care and support it is useful to use a reflective process of plan, do and review, as detailed in this resource.

1. Plan - To ensure that you obtain useful feedback you need to plan carefully.

To ensure that you take a personalised reflective approach to gathering and using feedback you need to develop a feedback plan which will consider the following issues:

- How you can gather feedback and what different methods you can use.
- What particular areas of practice you would find helpful to have feedback about.
- What barriers there might be to people providing you with honest and constructive feedback and how can you overcome these barriers.
- How you will reflect on the feedback you receive and how you will use this in your practice.

You will find the [principles for gathering feedback from people who use services and those that care for them](#) useful in developing your feedback plan.

2. Do - In gathering feedback you can use a range of approaches:

Questionnaires or feedback forms: these can be based on questions generated by groups for people being supported, or of carers, (e.g. welcome, respect, helpfulness, ability to communicate and/or give information, show sensitivity, listen, give constructive advice, share future plans and arrange when and where to meet again) and/or draw on the nine PCF capability domains. A questionnaire may be most appropriate where work has been undertaken over a period of time in a relatively formal setting (e.g. group work). A simple open-ended feedback form may be appropriate in some circumstances. If a questionnaire or feedback form is used, the NQSW should think carefully about how and when to use it, ensuring that the design is appropriate to the situation (including the communication needs) of the service user or carer. [Tool 3](#) provides a list of core questions which could be helpful in designing questionnaires, whilst [tool 2](#) provides some advice on ensuring that feedback provides evidence across the domains of the PCF.

Direct observations: When an observation of practice is planned, wherever possible the person being supported, and any carers, should be asked if they are willing to be part of the process. If they agree, it is the responsibility of the assessor and the NQSW to ensure that the person or carer is given the opportunity to comment on the NQSW's capabilities, and/or for the person or carer to be given feedback about the NQSW and assessor's own assessment. Not all people being supported will be able or want to be involved in the whole process; others will be willing to contribute and to be part of the assessment process. The assessor and the NQSW will need to plan how this is managed, using their knowledge of and relationship with the person to ensure that this is comfortable for all the parties involved. Particular advice on seeking feedback following direct observations of practice is offered in tool 6.

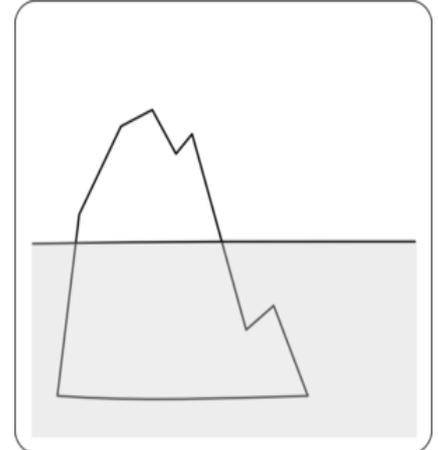
Informal feedback. The fact is that in some way we are receiving feedback all the time. This might be about the way someone responds to us, what a person's body

language “says”, comments that people make about us or our intervention. You need to think through how you can evidence and use this informal feedback.

The feedback iceberg

Feedback can be viewed as an iceberg. Formal feedback (that which is visible) is important but effectively it is only the tip of the iceberg. Informal feedback is likely to be hidden from view but taking deeper approaches to learning and assessment involve seeking this out.

Gathering both formal and informal feedback and comparing these to each other is the only way to take a holistic approach to seeking feedback from people who need care and support.



What constitutes informal feedback?

Social work is based on the development of relationships. Relationships are influenced by communication which is a two-way process. Therefore all of the ways which people communicate with you can be viewed as informal feedback. Taking this approach may be particularly helpful where people do not communicate verbally.

Effectively everything communicates something and all communication can be seen as providing feedback of some kind. If a person is failing to engage with you – how could you draw on this as informal feedback?

In every interaction you have, people may give you informal feedback. For example, if someone says “Thank you that was really helpful” or “I found you really easy to talk to and I feel much better for getting all that off my chest.” Often NQSWs respond to that by asking the person to fill in a questionnaire – to formalise the feedback. If you are thoughtful about your feedback strategy there should be no need to do this. Simply see the comments as informal feedback and reflect on what this tells you about your practice.

Effectively everything can be seen as informal feedback. The following might be specific examples:

- The way a person communicates with you
- The way a person behaves following interaction with you
- A person’s body language
- What a person says about you or to you.

The value of informal feedback

Informal feedback is particularly valuable in that it may not be so affected by bias and by power differentials. It is also useful to draw on informal feedback as it particularly assists with considering relationship building. Using informal feedback also causes the least inconvenience for people who need care and support, and it is very resource efficient.

The most effective way of gathering informal feedback is to recognise that everything can constitute informal feedback and to use your observational and active listening skills.

It is valuable to keep a record of informal feedback received. There is no singular approach to this – but you may wish to keep some ongoing informal feedback notes where you record the informal feedback. These notes can be useful in:

- Developing reflective accounts – and ensuring the feedback is used to evidence your reflections
- Discussing feedback in supervision
- Providing feedback evidence as part of the holistic assessment of your practice
- Tracking your progress.

Reflecting on your approach

In selecting a method to gather feedback you should think about the following questions:

- Why have I decided to use this approach?
- Why have I used these words, phrases, questions?
- Is this the best form of communication for this individual? How have I checked this out?
- Why I am asking for feedback? Is it the normal practice of the team, agency or organisation that I am working in? If not why not? If so, have I used their process or developed my own, what were the reasons behind either decision?
- How will I distinguish feedback about my own practice from feedback about the agency's policy/approach?
- How might I distinguish feedback about my own practice from feedback about the practice of other professionals involved (e.g. health), and or of the multi-professional working (or lack of it)?

3. Review - You should maximise the value of feedback on your practice by critically reflecting on the feedback received.

When you receive feedback you should think about the following questions:

- What is the quality of the feedback? What could have influenced this? Could it have been better?

- How have I used the results? Have they affected my practice, thinking, skills or knowledge?
- Does any of the feedback relate to the agency or others? What should I do with this information?

In reviewing your approach it would be useful for you to explore whether you have sought feedback in a wide range of situations. [Resource 4](#) highlights the fact that NQSWs sometimes avoid seeking feedback in more challenging situations and provides some advice on how to address the challenges. It will be useful for NQSWs to consider this resource at all stages of the feedback process.