



Department
for Education



Resource 3: Guidance for assessors on gathering and using feedback from people who need care and support in the ASYE process

This resource provides information for assessors on the approaches that can be used during the ASYE process to gather feedback from people who need care and support. It outlines the way in which assessors can support NQSWs to use feedback in the most useful way.

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,
- 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 the 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.

Feedback from people who need care and support is central to holistic assessment. To be useful the feedback should be sought in a holistic rather than mechanistic manner. In order to encourage NQSWs to be critically reflective and to develop their capability against the PCF they should be encouraged to think about the informal feedback they receive on the impact of their practice as an ongoing activity as well as developing and using a range of approaches to gather more formal feedback. It is useful to think about feedback from people who need care and support in the context of the reflective process of plan, do and review, as covered in this resource and in [resource 2](#) for NQSWs.

1. Plan- To ensure that feedback from people who need care and support is central to the ASYE experience you need to work in partnership with the NQSW to plan carefully.

In your assessor role you should ensure that the centrality of feedback from people being supported is highlighted at the learning agreement stage and that in the early part of the ASYE the NQSW thinks about how they will obtain such feedback. You need to consider how feedback will be linked to all aspects of the ASYE - for example, when constructing the personal development plan, NQSWs should think about how they can draw on feedback from people they support to enhance their practice and reflect on development outcomes.

NQSWs should be encouraged to develop a personalised feedback plan. You may find it useful to refer NQSWs to [resource two](#) (Guidance for NQSWs) and the College of Social Work's [principles for gathering feedback from people who use services and those that care for them](#).

NQSWs will find the [range of material](#) developed by Skills for Care useful in seeking and using feedback from people who need care and support.

2. Do

In gathering feedback you and the NQSW should use a range of methods.

The planning process should identify a range of methods which can be used to gather feedback from people who need care and support.

In gathering feedback perhaps the most important aspect to be aware of is that feedback can be informal and unsolicited. NQSWs should be encouraged to develop their observational skills and be alert to informal feedback.

When carrying out observations of the worker's practice you should think holistically about feedback from people who need care and support. Do not simply seek formal feedback at the end of the observation, but also observe informal feedback. [Tool 6](#) provides some guidance on seeking feedback following direct observations of practice.

NQSWs may find receiving feedback challenging. [Resource 4](#) provides some information about how practitioners can develop their skills in receiving feedback – it will be useful to provide this to NQSWs as they are preparing to make use of the feedback they receive.

3. Review

To ensure that the feedback is effectively used the NQSW needs to critically reflect on the feedback received. As an assessor you have a key role to play in encouraging this reflection.

You can enable deeper reflection on the feedback process and encourage improvements to the feedback process for the future by asking the NQSW to think through the following questions:

- What is the quality of the feedback? What could have influenced this? Could it have been better?
- How have you used the results? Have they affected your practice, thinking, skills or knowledge?
- Does any of the feedback relate to the agency or others? What should we do with this information?

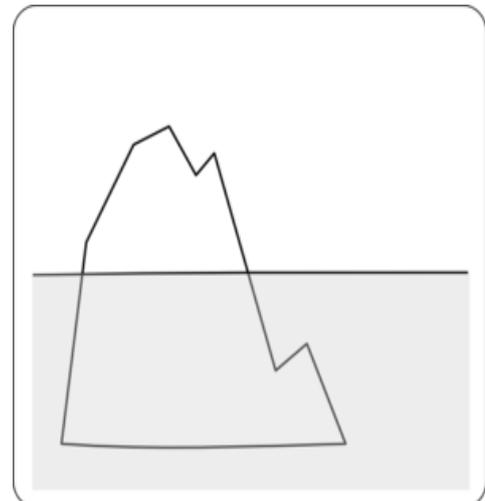
Recognising the value of informal feedback

Feedback from people who need care and support can take the form of formal and informal feedback. Informal feedback is often missed and assessors may need to support NQSWs to recognise the value of informal feedback and to consider how they can best capture and use such 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 the NQSW – how could this be drawn on as informal feedback?

In every interaction NQSWs have people are likely to give informal feedback. For example, someone saying “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 an NQSW is thoughtful about their feedback strategy there should be no

need to do this. The comments should simply be seen as informal feedback and the NQSW should reflect on what this tells them about their practice.

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

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

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.

Using observational and active listening skills

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

Keeping a record of informal feedback

It is valuable to keep a record of informal feedback received. There is no singular approach to this – but an NQSW 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 reflections
- Discussing feedback in supervision
- Providing feedback evidence as part of the holistic assessment of practice
- Tracking progress.

Reflective supervision and feedback from people who need care and support

Harkness and Hensley (1991) reported a significant degree of enhanced client satisfaction from those social workers who had received supervision which focused on improving outcomes for people being supported. Considering feedback from people who need care and support (both formal and informal) will therefore be useful not only for the NQSW but also for people being supported by social work services.

The following principles should be employed in supervision:

- The NQSW and supervisor should acknowledge that one function of supervision is about ensuring and enhancing the quality of practice experienced by people being supported. In this way the person's experience becomes a central focus in case discussion.
- Feedback from people who need care and support should be regularly discussed – both as a separate agenda item in some supervision sessions and also on an ongoing basis as part of case discussions.
- Supervision should provide a space to critically reflect on the outcomes of practice for people who need care and support.

Informal feedback

Informal feedback is very useful but often neglected. It may be effectively invisible to the NQSW. During case discussion the supervisor could ask questions designed to elicit informal feedback; for example, "How does the person feel about that? How do you know?"

The value of informal feedback should be acknowledged in supervision and the supervisor should encourage the NQSW to think about how they can record and reflect on the informal feedback they receive.

Formal feedback

In order to ensure that seeking feedback from people who need care and support is not viewed mechanistically and as a standalone task, supervisors should ask NQSWs to bring any formal feedback they receive to supervision for discussion.

Reflective questioning

If the feedback received is to be of any use to the NQSW they need to reflect on it and decide what to do as a result of the feedback. The following reflective questions can be useful when discussing feedback from people who need care and support in supervision:

- To what extent have you taken an open approach to receiving this feedback?
- How does the feedback make you feel?
- How do you think providing this feedback made the person feel?
- Did anything get in the way of obtaining this feedback? What? How did you address this?
- Do you agree with the content of the feedback? Why?
- Where did the person's view come from? What influenced them in providing the feedback? (What about power dynamics?)

- What does the feedback tell you about your practice?
- What does it tell you about your knowledge / values / skills?
- What can you learn from the feedback?
- To what extent is this feedback similar or different to the feedback you have received before?
- How will you use the feedback?
- What might you do differently as a result of the feedback?
- How do you feel about the whole process of gathering feedback from people who need care and support?

Reference

Harkness, D. and Hensley, H. (1991) *Changing the focus of social work supervision: effects on client satisfaction and generalised contentment*. British Journal of Social Work 36(6) pp. 506-512.