

The assessors and supervisors toolkit

Holistic assessment

Main themes

Holistic assessment is used when learning or performance objectives are interrelated or complex, as is the case in the professional development of social workers.

Your role, as an ASYE supervisor or assessor, is to reach a holistic decision about the quality of practice, using the knowledge and skills statement (KSS) and professional capabilities framework (PCF) as a framework. To achieve this, you must be able to analyse information and evidence from a number of different perspectives and sources. This includes being able to:

- analyse overarching performance, alongside specific detail (strengths, gaps, problems)
- draw on your own observations of your NQSW, alongside the observations of others, including other professionals and service users and carers
- work with agreed criteria and standards as a benchmark, alongside shared ideas of good practice and professionalism
- provide quantifiable evidence of your NQSW's progress of all types (good, steady, poor).

The challenge for you, as supervisor or assessor, is to be able to bring these different

sources of information together, in order to construct a holistic judgement that reflects the dynamic complexity of social work. You must avoid restricting the focus of your assessment to limited dimensions or details.

The **record of support and progressive assessment (RSPA)** is designed to help you construct your assessment in the most efficient way during the time your NQSW is undertaking the ASYE. The **critical reflection log (CRL)** produced by your NQSW over the same period of time will be a major, but not the only, source of evidence to back up your assessment.

The skills a supervisor or assessor uses to produce a holistic assessment can be grouped into three main areas:

- assessing progression
- use of the KSS/PCF
- use of evidence

Assessing progression

Your assessment of your NQSW should be put in the context of their overall progression as a professional. As it's your task to assess their progress over the ASYE, you'll need to anchor this in an assessment of their starting point (skills, development needs, gaps), otherwise it will be difficult to effectively capture how they have progressed while you have been their assessor. Equally, your assessment at the end of ASYE should include an evaluation of your NQSW's strengths/needs/gaps for the next stage of their development as a professional

social worker.

By focussing on progress, you may need to identify problem areas and work on them with your NQSW. Your NQSW may make mistakes or show poor practice, but if they can learn from these and improve, this will become solid evidence of progression.

The **RSPA** provides a framework for you to assess your NQSW's progress. It incorporates an analysis of their starting point with reviews at three, six and twelve months. This means your decision-making will be ongoing, and not delayed until the end of ASYE. If you identify areas where learning and progress is not taking place as you would expect, you can draw in support from your ASYE coordinator or employer and/or address any development needs through action plans agreed at the reviews. You have the option of an additional review at nine months if you continue to have concerns.

You won't be doing a holistic assessment if your assessment of your NQSW is static, descriptive, or limited to a particular moment in time. It will not be holistic if you (and/or your NQSW) are reluctant to see mistakes as opportunities to learn and progress, or assessment of progress has not been integrated into your ongoing supervisory relationship, with a clear understanding about what evidence will be used as the starting point to measure progress.

Use of the KSS/PCF

The **knowledge and skills statement for social workers in adult services (KSS)** is a central tool for you to use as you shape and evaluate the information you have about your NQSW. It's underpinned by the **professional capabilities framework (PCF)**. The relationship between the KSS and PCF is outlined in section four of the **the social work ASYE – guidance for NQSWs**.

The KSS provides a current context for social work in adult services, and provides a framework for your NQSW to extend their knowledge and practice experience in legal literacy, safeguarding and working in

partnership with people in need of care and support. The KSS also highlights the need for your NQSW to demonstrate progression in their ability to reflect, analyse and demonstrate reasoned, defensible decision-making.

The PCF is an overarching framework for all social workers which can be used in career progression and performance management. **The PCF level descriptor for ASYE** indicates the expectations you should have of your NQSW's capabilities, as demonstrated across the nine domains, and how they can progress further in their development beyond ASYE.

The **RSPA** and **CRL** provide a structured format for you to work with your NQSW and assess them in relationship to the KSS. The different areas outlined in the KSS should be considered separately and together, as this will help you gain evidence of your NQSW's overall professional development. Specific details can be used as reference points for your assessment but should not be driven by them. You may need to use the KSS and/or the PCF to identify concerns and why they need to be addressed. You can also use the PCF to identify areas that will help stretch your NQSW further in the next stage of their development.

You won't be doing a holistic assessment if you focus on 'ticking off' individual sentences in the KSS and do not consider the connections and overarching expectations of professional practice in the statement as a whole. You'll not be making a holistic assessment if you do not base your expectations of what your NQSW should be able to do on the appropriate PCF level descriptor, but apply other standards such as organisational expectations.

Use of evidence

In making your progressive holistic assessment in the RSPA, you'll draw on selected evidence from a range of sources. You should refer to evidence gathered in supervision and/or demonstrated in your NQSW's CRL including direct observation, feedback from service users and carers,

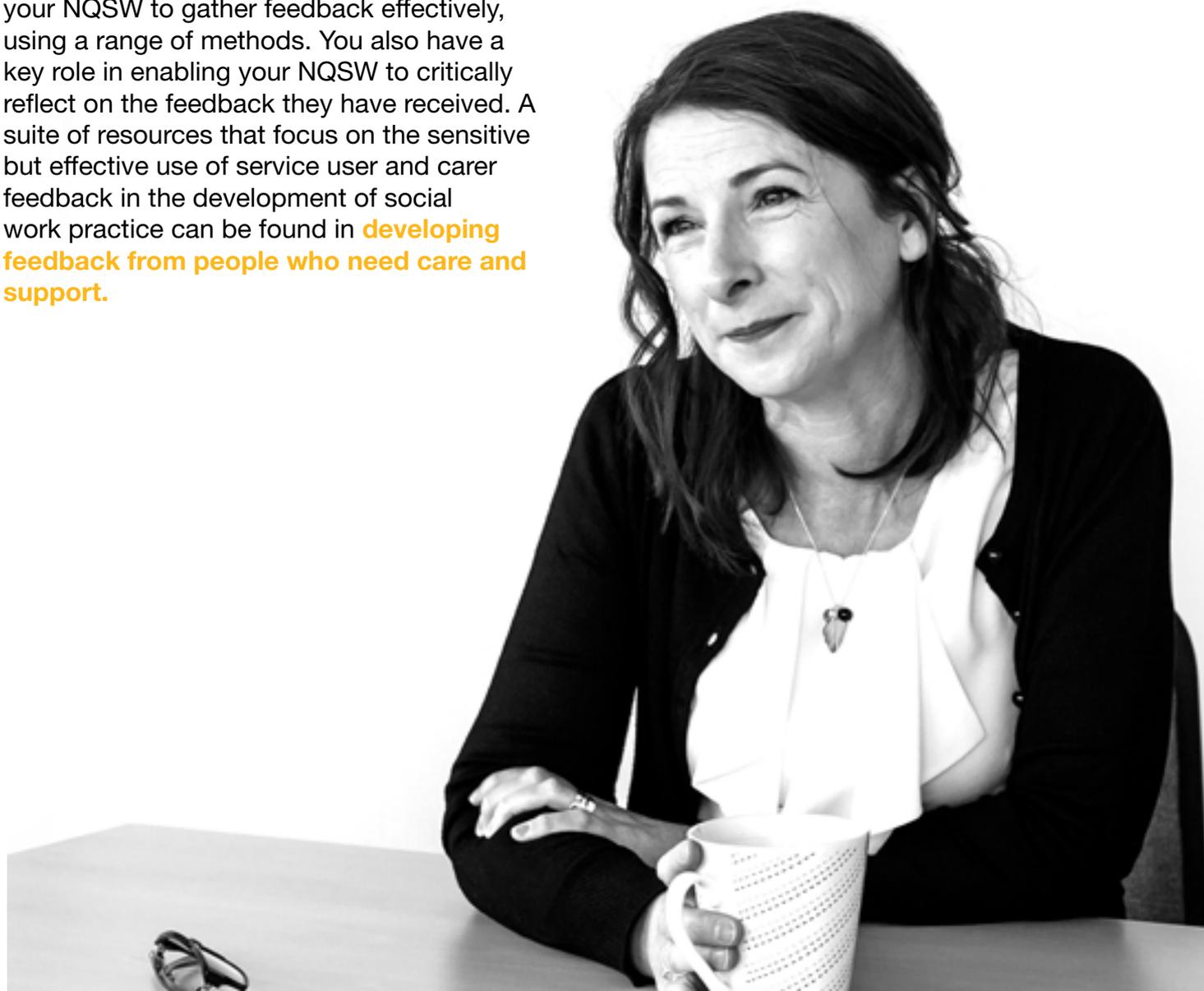
feedback from other professionals and samples of the NQSW's professional documentation. Referring to a range of sources, taken from different cases, people and occasions over a period of time should provide sufficient depth for you to make a robust assessment decision.

Gathering different types of evidence is key to your role as supervisors or assessor. Direct observation of practice is central to a robust holistic assessment. A project was established to ensure consistency in the observation of NQSWs and improve supervisor or assessor skills, and a range of resources to support this can be found in **improving the quality of direct observation of practice**.

Feedback from people in need of care and support is another core element to holistic assessment. The challenge for you as supervisor or assessor is to integrate this into supervisory relationship and work with your NQSW to gather feedback effectively, using a range of methods. You also have a key role in enabling your NQSW to critically reflect on the feedback they have received. A suite of resources that focus on the sensitive but effective use of service user and carer feedback in the development of social work practice can be found in **developing feedback from people who need care and support**.

Templates and specific requirements for direct observation, feedback from service users and carers, feedback from other professionals and samples of the NQSW's professional documentation have been integrated into the **CRL**.

You won't be doing a holistic assessment if you use evidence to drive the assessment, rather than using it to support it, or if you don't select relevant pieces of evidence, but rely on a large volume of evidence. You won't be making a holistic assessment if you have not used a variety of different types of evidence, from different sources at different times or do not show in your assessment how the evidence backs up the assessment decision you have made.



Further information

ASYE supervisors and assessors can come from a variety of backgrounds, so there may be gaps in your knowledge about holistic supervision and assessment which you would like to explore further.

- If you're relatively new to providing supervision **helping your student develop critical reflection skills** will increase your understanding of your role in supporting the learning of others.
- Undertaking direct observation of practice demands an additional set of skills. This is explored further in the section on **CPD and leadership for ASYE supervisors/assessors**. As a first step, you may find it helpful to look at the assessor self-assessment tool for direct observation which is included in **improving the quality of direct observation of practice**
- There are links to **templates for the RSPA and the CRL** here including an evidence log.

Supervisor's self audit checklist

- Are you familiar with the KSS and PCF? Could you use them as learning tools, for yourself and others? What can you do to incorporate them more fully into your supervision and holistic assessment of others?
- Do you have previous experience of undertaking direct observation of NQSWs (or other learners) and helping others to reflect on the outcomes? What do you need to do to prepare yourself for these aspects of holistic assessment?
- Do you have previous experience of seeking feedback from service users and carers and helping others to reflect on the outcomes? What do you need to do to prepare yourself for these aspects of holistic assessment?
- What supports are there for you to continue developing your understanding of holistic assessment e.g. support groups for assessors, feedback from internal and external moderation processes?

