**November 2015**

**ASYE (adults) external moderation**

**Guidance on developing a memorandum of collaboration[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Background**

External moderation is an important element of the national system of quality assurance incorporated within the [Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services, 2015 (KSS)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-social-work-knowledge-and-skills). The purpose of the national quality assurance system is to give the profession confidence that employers’ judgements are consistent across the country.

Every adults’ services employer claiming Department of Health funding for the ASYE is required to be a member of an ASYE partnership in order to participate in external or partnership moderation. The partnership moderation process will provide peer review, support, challenge and scrutiny of ASYE employer judgements in order to promote consistency and to identify and encourage the adoption of good practice.

The Skills for Care [external moderation guidance for ASYE partnerships](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Social-work/The-assessed-and-supported-year-in-employment-Adults/External-moderation.aspx) states that an ASYE partnership will have a current and regularly reviewed memorandum of understanding or collaboration which is signed by senior leaders within organisations whose areas of responsibility includes social work, outlines governance arrangements, membership, frequency of meetings and parts played by senior managers; principal social workers are expected to assume key roles in external moderation.

This document provides further guidance on the composition of a memorandum of collaboration for ASYE adults’ external moderation processes. It complements the ‘external moderation guidance for ASYE partnerships’ and is informed by the Social Work Reform Board ‘Effective Partnership Working’ publications which were published in 2012; see Appendix 1 for further information

**The national moderation panel will ask each ASYE partnership to submit their memorandum of collaboration to the March 2016 panel for review; all partnerships therefore need to complete their MoC by 1 February 2016.**

**Social work partnerships**

Some employers may be members of existing wider social work education and development partnerships. Such partnerships may already have a memorandum of collaboration and this may include those who developed a memorandum to meet the requirements of the Skills for Care employer transition fund which operated from 2012–14.

If the broader social work partnership, which may be a teaching partnership, is going to also act as an ASYE partnership for the purposes of external moderation as detailed in the KSS, the partnership will need to ensure that ASYE external moderation processes are clearly identified within the memorandum either within the main body of the document or within a sub section.

**Content**

The memorandum of collaboration should include the following areas, these could be headings within the document:

1. **Introduction and background**

This section will include a brief background or history of the partnership, member organisations and the community it serves. If it is a broader social work education or development partnership then this section can explain how ASYE external moderation is incorporated within its structure, remit and activities.

1. **Aims and objectives**

The purpose of external moderation within an ASYE partnership is to scrutinise both the ASYE final assessment judgements of its individual employer members and the ASYE support and assessment process. The partnership may wish to expand this objective to include other collaborative activities such as supporting the development of ASYE assessors and delivery of an ASYE programme.

1. **Governance and compliance**

Governance includes clarifying accountability and responsibilities; who is the partnership accountable to and for what? Again, if the ASYE external moderation process is integrated within a wider social work education partnership then there may be a reporting link to a strategic partnership body. If not, then the partnership may accept collective responsibility for ensuring that effective external moderation takes place and each organisation should nominate a senior manager or principal social worker to act as a signatory and commit their organisation to participating fully in the process.

The memorandum of collaboration should be signed by a senior member of each partner organisation

Other areas to include in this section:

* **Decision making**

This should include who has the final say in the event of non- consensus and also record how disagreements or disputes are addressed. A nominated Chair will usually have a key role in these situations.

* **Compliance/non compliance**

This needs to include the actions open to the partnership if partners don’t attend, participate or submit evidence. If the partnership is not able to resolve these issues then Skills for Care locality managers and national social work project managers can offer support and advice. Skills for Care will also be issuing principles for promoting consistency and compliance in late 2015. These will outline the approach Skills for Care will take in the event of organisations, who are claiming grant funding for ASYE in adults’ services, significantly and consistently failing to adhere to the KSS.

1. **Membership and roles**

The following areas should be included in this section:

Membership and attendance at meetings:

* Relationship with the private and voluntary sector: is the partnership open to new members, how will it offer support to the private and voluntary sector?
* Whether the partnership includes adults’ and child and family services or just adults’ services. If it includes children’s then it needs to specify whether children’s will participate in a joint moderation process or not.
* What constitutes a quorum at meetings?
* Meeting attendance: who attends from each organisation / at what level?
* HEI involvement
* How often is membership reviewed?
* How can people who need care and support contribute to the process?

Roles and responsibilities:

* Chairing meetings

Partners should elect a Chair and confirm their role, responsibilities and term of office. The Chair should sign the external moderation summary report which will be submitted to the national moderation panel on a yearly basis.

* Reviewers

Partnership members who are responsible for reviewing ASYE evidence as part of the external moderation process should normally be registered social workers, working at the advanced level of the Professional Capabilities Framework and able to demonstrate professional educator capabilities. The partnership may require reviewers to serve a term of office.

Administrative issues

The memorandum of collaboration should specify responsibilities for managing random sampling and storing and sending out partnership information to members and to the national moderation panel.

1. **Moderation procedures and timescales**

This section needs to outline how the moderation process will operate and can include the following:

* Moderation timing / timetabling.
* Specifying the evidence to be reviewed and whether the process includes monitoring the progress of NQSWs throughout the ASYE or only reviewing the final assessment evidence after the ASYE has been completed and the assessment decision has been confirmed by the internal moderation process.
* The process of giving feedback, including who is given feedback (i.e. employers, assessors and possibly NQSWs) and how is this recorded.
* Predicted volume of evidence in a year.
* Submission dates/lead up time.
* Random sampling methodology and process and how to quantify the 10% for adults’ ASYE.
* Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing agreements including, what level of anonymising is required or whether a confidentiality agreement is acceptable.
* Venues for meetings.
1. **Support and development**

The partnership should state how they will support, develop and monitor reviewers to ensure they have on-going capability to fulfil their role in the external moderation process. Partnerships can also include arrangements to develop ASYE assessors collaboratively across the partnership.

1. **Review and evaluation**

This should include arrangements for reviewing the memorandum of collaboration regularly. It should also specify how the effectiveness and impact of the partnership, including the external moderation process, will be evaluated. The external moderation summary sheets, where action plans and their impact can be recorded, can support this process.

**Appendix 1:**

The following is an extract from the Social Work Reform Board document published in 2012. The full document is available at:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/tcsw/Introduction%20to%20effective%20partnership%20working.pdf>

**Effective partnership working**

**Key principles of partnership and collaboration**

**between employers and higher education providers**

**Part 2 (page 6)**

**2. Record their agreement in a memorandum of collaboration and keep it under regular review**

Partnerships can no longer rely on personal relationships alone to achieve their outcomes and written agreements should be used to support the interpersonal relationships that underpin effective collaboration.

Partnership agreements should be recorded in a memorandum of co-operation. This should be a simple document, which avoids being legalistic, long or complicated, as employers and universities may need to enter into more than one agreement in their local area or come together as groups of employers and universities, working under the same memorandum. It should include the arrangements for keeping the Memorandum under review.

As a non-legal document, the prime purpose of a memorandum of co-operation is to set out the aims and outcomes of the partnership, the activities agreed and the responsibilities of all those involved. There may be a need for a key principles agreement which is overarching, and operational agreements which focus on delivery.

A memorandum of co-operation provides a mechanism to ensure the activities of a partnership is properly authorised. It is essential that the memorandum is signed at senior manager level for employers and at faculty level for universities, to demonstrate accountability for decisions that affect the quality of service received by service users and carers, and the resources committed to this. A memorandum of co-operation also provides formal evidence of partnership arrangements to meet the Health Professions Council’s Standards of Education and Training (SET 5.1, 5.10).

Senior managers are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the partnership. In doing this, senior managers are likely to take into account:

* local workforce needs and workforce planning data, across the statutory and non-statutory sectors
* meeting the SWRB agenda and other key agendas e.g. Employers’ Standard, CPD recommendations, Munro recommendations
* the priorities of ADASS, ADCS, the higher education sector and other key strategic bodies

This does not mean that senior managers should attend all partnership meetings, but they should demonstrate ownership of and accountability for the direction they have set through signing the memorandum of co-operation. Successful partnerships often have a ‘champion’ at senior management level, who monitors and supports the implementation of the strategy.

Senior manager engagement is even more significant in a climate of financial cuts and reduced resources. Successful partnerships acknowledge the amount of time that needs to be invested in effective collaboration. In setting a strategic direction, senior managers should allocate resources (staff time and money) to enable partnerships to carry out the agreed activities, whilst maximising the cost-effective benefits of partners pooling funds and sharing delivery.

1. Partnerships may use an alternative title of memorandum of understanding [↑](#footnote-ref-1)