

Key messages from National Quality Assurance Panel (NQAP)

5 November 2025

The NQAP would like to thank all the employers, assessors and NQSW's whose ASYE evidence was reviewed by the NQAP on 5 November 2025. Being able to review this evidence assists the NQAP in developing key messages to support the development and consistency of ASYE programmes across England.

Messages and reflections that the NQAP wanted to share with the sector are:

- Overall, NQAP members found the submitted evidence to be of a high standard. They were especially pleased with examples of holistic assessment, where direct observations, service user feedback, and input from other professionals were clearly connected to the NQSW's critical reflection and then linked to the next stage of their development.
- The panel noted the level of support that organisations and assessors are providing to NQSW's to ensure they have a successful, supported, and developmental first year in practice.
- Supporting NQSWs and assessors to make better use of SMART objectives is essential. When applied effectively, these objectives inform NQSWs' critical reflection and help identify developmental needs. However, when objectives are unfocused, they become too general to be of practical value, making it difficult for either NQSWs or assessors to evidence progression and development.
- Where strong and well-developed evidence was presented, it was clearly aligned to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Practice Quality Standards (PQS). In contrast, evidence of a lower standard tended to be more descriptive and lacked explicit links to these frameworks, making it harder to demonstrate how the NQSW was meeting the required capabilities. As these two sets of standards underpin ASYE, they should always be evident in the submissions provided by NQSWs and assessors.

- NQSW's are qualified social workers on the ASYE programme. The panel noted that all too frequently NQSW's were referred to as students and their assessors as Practice Educators. Terminology is crucial and therefore it is important to refer to NQSW's as social workers not students. It is equally important not to refer to them as ASYE's, which is the scheme and not their role.
- NQAP members noted ongoing concerns about NQSWs not having protected workloads, particularly early in the year, and not taking their PDP time. While recognising the pressures employers face, the panel emphasised that a protected first year is vital in giving workers a strong foundation to build confidence and knowledge, supporting their future careers in social work.
- NQAP view the ASYE as a vital opportunity for NQSWs to build a strong foundation in social work. Evidence reviewed showed examples of good practice, though often limited to narrow areas. They would therefore like to see more opportunities for NQSWs to gain a broader understanding of social work wherever possible.
- NQAP observed that some organisations are not using the latest templates. Adopting these would promote greater consistency across the programme and among assessors. Those relying on outdated paperwork appeared to require NQSWs to complete more written work than necessary, so using the updated templates reduces the bureaucratic burden for both NQSWs and assessors.
- Panel members noted it would have been helpful to have seen when supervisions took place and whether they were reflective or work-related supervisions.
- NQAP noted that early support plans enable NQSWs to gain more from the year, particularly when low-level concerns are identified promptly. As the ASYE is a developmental year, those who spread direct observations and feedback evenly across it were better able to recognise their progress and reflect critically on their development.

- NQAP noted that some internal moderation panels focused mainly on pass/fail recommendations. They encouraged panels to take a broader view of the programme, considering all aspects to strengthen its development and provide more effective support for NQSWs.
- NQAP would like to re-emphasise the importance of confidentiality within evidence. Some pieces of evidence forwarded to Skills for Care did not adhere to the required standards. If evidence forwarded to the NQAP breached confidentiality, then it is possible that evidence seen at internal and external moderation also breaches confidentiality. Therefore, NQAP would like to remind all NQSW, Assessors and Employers of the requirements which are to protect people with lived experience. **Please see the [Statement of anonymisation and confidentiality](#).**