Assessed and Supported Year of Employment - questions and answers.

April 2015

The Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE), a recommendation of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), came into place in 2012 and is designed to support social workers who have recently qualified improve and develop their practice.

All social workers will be expected to commence ASYE within two years of graduating. The ASYE will be based around both the PCF (Professional Capabilities Framework) and the KSS (Knowledge & Skills Statement). There are two separate KSSs, one for child and family social work and the other for social workers working in adult services, both have been designed by the Chief Social Workers to promote good practice.

Skills for Care currently offer support to adult ASYE programmes in England but have recently been awarded a contract to support child & family programmes, watch this space!

At present the Department of Education is responsible for all Child & Family ASYE programmes. The Skills for Care website has all the information you need about ASYE and has an excellent mini guide to ASYE for NQSWs. The SCIE website also has some useful information and videos about ASYE.

Skills for Care also have regional offices – look at the Skills for Care website for your nearest regional office.

Besides the information contained on the above site we have been asked the following questions over the last two years and the answers may be useful:

Q1. “Is ASYE compulsory and if I don’t do it will I still be a qualified social worker?”

ASYE is not compulsory, social workers are qualified when they complete and pass their degree in social work. However in time it may be that some employers will look more positively on those who have completed the ASYE. If you register with HCPC as a social worker you can practice as one.

Q2 “I can’t find a job as a qualified social worker; does that mean that I cannot undertake the ASYE”?

You do not need to be employed in a post with the title “social worker” to undertake ASYE. It is perfectly possible to undertake the ASYE whilst working in a job that hasn’t got the title social worker. For example work in social care, education, housing, health. What has to be demonstrated in order to achieve the ASYE is that you are able to evidence capability in all the domains of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the more recent relevant Knowledge & Skills Statement (KSS) - Adults and Children and Families.
BASW were central to the development of the PCF and are active in a current review of the framework. Both the PCF and KSS must be incorporated in the ASYE.

Q3. “My employer hasn’t heard of ASYE, what can I do?”

This is a common problem, particularly for NQSWs who are not working in local authority adults or children’s departments. (And even if you have a job as a social worker in a local authority your manager may not have heard about ASYE)

If you are a registered social worker with HCPC it is irrelevant what your job title is. What you should do is gather information about ASYE from Skills for Care and then ask to speak to your manager or someone in the organisation with responsibility for continual professional development.

The response of employers will be variable. Some may say that they are not interested; others may want to know more. Don’t give up at the first attempt and if you are a BASW member we can advise you on this and if appropriate we can take up with your employer. At the end of the day employers – both those who are employing you as a social worker, or as a support worker (or other role) do not have to let you undertake ASYE. However BASW are finding that many employees who explain the scheme well to employers are getting a positive response. They will get financial help to support you from the responsible agency eg DfE or Skills for Care.

Q4. “My employer wants to know what they will get out of it by supporting me on ASYE”

There are a number of real selling points that you can make to your employer. These include:

- £2,000 for child & family ASYE, a related sum for adult ASYE, that goes to the employer for each person undertaking ASYE
- The employer gets the assurance from knowing that NQSWs have to demonstrate their continued professional development, their capability and the increased learning and knowledge that comes with that
- The employer can demonstrate that it is a good employer that supports staff with their CPD

Q5. “My employer wants to know what are the costs to them of supporting me on ASYE?”

ASYE can be undertaken in a variety of different ways. Ultimately ASYE is about ensuring that NQSWs receive opportunities to learn and reflect and apply that learning to practice, so there is no one model of how that can be achieved. Some employers will support ASYE to attend a “programme”, which a number of universities and employers have developed, or are developing. These programmes may have some input on particular issues from say a university department, or they may provide opportunities for those undertaking ASYE to meet together in groups and learn from each other. The £2,000 or related sum can be spent on access to these types of programmes and or providing backfill. It is not compulsory that social workers undertaking the ASYE have to attend a designated programme
The recommendations for ASYE are that those undertaking it have a reduced case load, (this is referring to those people in designated social work posts who are undertaking it), and time for reflection and quality supervision. Reduced workloads and time for reflective supervision should be the right of newly qualified social workers anyway, so it can be argued that this should not be seen as a cost to the employer. We know that employers who invest in NQSWs reap the rewards of loyalty and commitment from staff. If you are working in a support worker role then some of these recommendations will need a degree of interpretation. For example if you are supporting a group of individuals or groups then it may not be possible to “reduce” the workload and it maybe that more aspects of the ASYE will need to be undertaken in one’s own time.

**Q6. “Professional supervision – my employer is not able to provide me with a qualified social worker to provide professional supervision that can support my development and assess my capability against the PCF standards, what can I do?”**

An essential component of the ASYE is that NQSWs are given access to professional supervision and assessment from a qualified social worker. This can be given by a line manager, from someone else in the organisation, or if no one is available within the organisation from someone from outside the organisation.

The £2,000 (or related sum) that the employer can receive for supporting an employee on ASYE can be used to buy in professional supervision from a social worker.

**Q7. “I am on an ASYE programme and I am finding problems with it, for example I am not getting a reduced case load, or reflective supervision. What can I do about it?”**

This is a difficult question because lots of people in NQSW positions feel vulnerable. You may be worried that you will not be deemed competent, or that you will not receive a permanent contract if you complain. However, it is not wise just to ignore problems. It maybe that your employer is not aware of your concerns and it maybe that talking to them dispassionately may help. Your employer also may not fully understand ASYE and again, try and inform them about the scheme. If these actions don’t work then do seek advice. If you are a BASW member you can talk things through with us and consider possible courses of action.

**Q8. “Do supervisors / assessors for ASYE have to be Practice Assessors?”**

No they don’t, the only stipulation is that that the person assessing must be a qualified social worker. Many practice teachers are considering getting involved in assessing, but it is not a requirement. Social workers can often now receive ASYE assessment training as part of their development. If your manager is a qualified social worker then they can do the assessment. However this may cause problems for some managers in terms of their time and their knowledge of the process. It maybe that the assessment can be shared between the manager and someone else, or that assessment is entirely undertaken by someone other than the manager.

**Q9. “Is there a time limit for starting or completing the ASYE after graduation?”**

The original recommendation of the SWRB is that NQSWs should complete ASYE within two years of qualification, although Skills for Care are now saying that the aim now is for people
to start the ASYE within two years of qualification, with some discretion for employers to start
the programme after two years. BASW are of the view that the two year time table is only a
recommendation. Many NQSWs are not getting work in a suitable post for say two years
after qualification, or are finding that their employer is not supporting ASYE. BASW
recommends that you talk to your employer about ASYE even if you are say two years post
qualified. And to repeat you qualify to be a social worker on completion of your degree, not
after ASYE

Q10. “I am employed by an agency, can I undertake ASYE?”

A lot will depend on the views of the agency. Some agencies have supported social workers
undertaking post qualification programmes in the past, and others haven't. It is certainly
worth talking to the agency and explaining ASYE to them.

Q11. “What do I do if I am told that I have not passed the ASYE?”

You should have regular review meetings as part of the ASYE and discussing progress
should be part of an ongoing dialogue. Refer to your organisational policy and guidance
about ASYE and seek advice and support from your Practice Assessor, BASW or trade
union (SWU). If you have real concerns about your failure do not hesitate to speak to Skills
for Care. All involved want social workers to pass their ASYE successfully and if there are
any problems you should hear about them way before the end of the programme.

Q12. “Will successful completion of ASYE be linked to my probationary period?”

Some employers may include passing the ASYE as one of the criteria for passing your
employment probation period. Always ask about your probationary expectations, review
meetings, and ask for a copy of the probationary policy and guidance for your organisation.

Q13. “If I move jobs or have a break in employment can I continue with ASYE?”

This will depend on your own personal circumstances such as does the new employer have
an ASYE scheme you can transfer to, how long would your break be, how far are you into
the ASYE year? It is not impossible to transfer but once registered you really have one year
to complete the programme. Skills for Care will give you advice relevant to your situation so
please contact them.

Q14. “If I go abroad after qualifying for a year and return could I do ASYE then?”

At present you have two years post qualifying to complete the ASYE so this should not
hinder you.

Q15. “Will I get a certificate?”

All successful ASYE candidates will receive a certificate from The College of Social Work
once the employer has notified them of the pass.

Q16. “Is ASYE monitored or accredited?”

Most employers offering ASYE programmes are part of local partnerships with HEIs and PVI
organisations and have been jointly responsible for benchmarking and ensuring good
practice exists within their locality. Skills for Care and TCSW have recently moved this
forward and are responsible in ensuring both local and national consistency in ASYE provision and delivery, through moderation and validation with the aim of a future national panel scrutinising programmes.

**Q17. “How can BASW help?”**

Both the BASW England team and Social Workers Union (if you have opted in) can provide advice or sign post to the appropriate place. Do not hesitate to contact us (if you are a member) via email or telephone.

Sue Kent - England Professional Officer