

Organisation: Gateshead

ASYE co-ordinator: Zoe Hovells

Adults ASYE programme

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| The practice identified | Engaging with students before they take up post and begin their ASYE |
| Element(s) of the NEC/NEC+ to which the example relates | A1 A2 A3 A9 A10 B4 B8 B10 |
| Please record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the relevant points you would like the NQAP to consider in their endorsement process▪ the reasons and evidence for the identified practice meeting or contributing in a meaningful way to meeting an element of the NEC/NEC+ | |
| <p>The Social Work Academy in Gateshead fully launched in September 2022 with our first full cohort in the Academy model. As part of the offer from Gateshead, we provided monthly group supervision which focuses on different topics and areas of reflection. It was identified that at the start of a Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) journey it can be overwhelming starting in a new place and undertaking the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). Therefore, we identified a tool to help with this which is for the finishing cohort of NQSWs to write a letter to the new cohort with how they felt, helpful advice and guidance for someone starting their journey. The letters are then included in the induction pack for the new cohort and have been well received by cohorts since.</p> <p>Thematic overview:</p> <p>Whilst completing the letters with a finishing cohort of NQSWs in their first year, there were themes which came out in reflective discussions and in their letters. Similar themes have come up each time and some of those are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Emotional wellbeing and self-care. NQSWs are encouraged to try find a good balance right from the start, to enjoy the quieter start and training, the importance of a lunch break and time away from the desk. An overall theme about the priority of our own wellbeing in such a difficult job came out with helpful tips on how to do this. (NEC A3)2. Importance of supervision, whether this be case supervision, reflective or group. The themes were around prioritizing this, how beneficial reflection can be and the support of others in a group setting. (NEC B4, NEC B10, PQS 9)3. Setting boundaries for yourself with families mainly, but also with colleagues. In the letters, there was advice about wanting to say “yes” to everything and being available all the time. However, this is not possible and leads you to feel ‘burnt out’. The letters emphasize that it is ok to say no and set realistic expectations with those who the NQSW are working with. (NEC A2, NEC A3) | |

4. Another theme which was identified was around organisation skills and ensuring that NQSW are using their diary well and getting into good habits. All the letters reflect how quickly their ASYE has gone, encouraging NQSW to enjoy it and take all the learning in. (PQS 2, NEC A3)

Responses to themes:

The Academy have developed a Year 2 offer in response to the themes that were identified within the letters (NEC A10), our offer has been running since September 2023 and it is an area which is developing with each cohort in line with their development needs and requests. The following areas are currently within the offer for your Year 2 social workers:

- 2 development days in the year, these days consist of training and development sessions focused on areas which the Year 2's want to develop. Examples of this have been emotional resilience, work/life balance, life story work, the impact of court and reflective supervision using tools such as Action Learning Sets. (NEC B8, NEC B10)
- All our NQSWs in Gateshead have an Academy mentor during their ASYE, which is an experienced social worker who provides monthly reflective supervision to them. Gateshead now offer this into Year 2, with an option for reflective supervision with their mentor every 3 months to maintain those links and have that space to reflect. (NEC B10)
- As part of the development days and Year 2 offer, we look at organisational support and building our NQSWs confidence in boundaries for their work/ life balance. (NEC, A3)
- All feedback is also then reflected in the NQSWs first year, we take on board the feedback to build into their induction programme and the supervision offer. (NEC+ A9 NEC A1)

Guidance for Local Authorities:

Dear Local Authority,

I hope you find this guidance helpful, and it supports you when completing the letters with newly qualified social workers. I find it such a lovely activity to do with them and they enjoy reflecting on their first year, which they always say has gone so quickly!

I do this activity with the NQSWs in their final group supervision, we already have this split up into 2 smaller groups and they know it is a reflective safe space. The groups usually have about 5-6 people in. I ask them to begin by thinking about what they would have found useful to know on their first day or week. Then to go from there about their own reflections on the year, giving guidance and advice, which can be as simple as where is a good place for a coffee or how to find something in the building. It can also be more detailed with portfolio advice, or podcasts to listen to.

In the past, some of our NQSW have written their letters individually, whilst others have chosen to do it as a group and get their ideas down together. The activity is led by the NQSWs and what they want to share, it has always been positive and any areas they have struggled with, they have thought about this in a productive way of how a new social worker could manage this. I do give prompts if needed, help them think about ways to word something or think about a solution if they are unsure what they would do or advise. I ask NQSWs if they mind their name being on the letter, this can then help the new social workers identify them and come to them for further support if they need. It helps with relationship building and that feeling of not being the only one to feel a certain way.

The biggest area I have seen in the letters is the importance of self-care and emotional well-being, the finishing cohort identify people to support them and how important

supervision is. I find it positive to hear all the ways that the cohort feel that they have been supported and anything to develop is taken into their second-year offer.

Hopefully this helps you to start completing this and adapt it to what works in your local authority. I really see the benefits of the letters and it gives that personal touch to the new cohort starting their journey. I feel it also gives the finishing NQSWs closure on their year and the space to reflect on how far they have come.

All NQSW should be so proud of gaining their degree, starting and completing their ASYE. All of this should be a celebration and I am always grateful to be part of this.