

ASYE and Career Progression

Encouraging and shaping your journey in social work

KEY

- ASYE - Assessed & Supported Year in Employment
- NQ - Newly Qualified
- NQSW - Newly Qualified Social Worker
- Level 1 - NQ Social Worker
- Level 2 - Experienced Social Worker
- Level 3 - Senior Social Worker
- KSS - Key Skills Statements (Department for Education)
- Advanced Practitioner - Advanced level Social Work Practitioner with a specific remit for improving social work practice across Children's Services
- Case Supervisor - The line manager of a social work team
- ASYE Co-ordinator - An Advanced Practitioner who has the lead for the ASYE programme in North East Lincolnshire Council's Children's Services
- Buddy - A more experienced worker who will provide support and assistance to NQ workers
- PDP - Personal Development Plan
- MACE - Multi Agency Child Exploitation
- LCSB - Local Children's Safeguarding Board
- SoS - Signs of Safety
- DASH - Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- North East Lincolnshire Council's Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2019 – 2021)
- North East Lincolnshire Council's Children's Services Roles and Responsibilities (Manager's Guide)
- Document PART ONE ASYE programme
- North East Lincolnshire Council's Children's Services Roles and Responsibilities (Manager's Guide)
- Document PART TWO Progression from Level 2 to Level 3
- ASYE Policy and Procedures
- North East Lincolnshire Council's Children's Services Supervision Framework and Guidance (2019)

INTRODUCTION

Working with children, young people, their families and carers is one of the most important jobs we can do. As Social Workers, we have a responsibility and the opportunity to improve, positively influence and make a big difference to the lives of those we work with (NELC's Children's Services Recruitment & Retention Strategy 2019-2021).

This career pathway handbook has been developed as part of our Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Strategy and relates to all social work posts in North East Lincolnshire Council. It aims to provide clarity about the criteria and processes to be followed in order for qualified and registered (HCPC) professionals to progress between:

- Level 1 Newly Qualified Social Worker
- Level 2 Experienced Social Worker
- Level 3 Senior Social Worker

It also seeks to explain the different career pathways that exist beyond Level 3 and how you could achieve them. This document should be read in conjunction with the role profile(s) for the posts.

Progression between the levels of Social Worker does not automatically happen after a set period of post qualifying experience. Some social workers will take longer than others to progress through the levels, particularly between Level 2 and Level 3 and indeed, some workers may decide to practice at Level 2 for a number of years without wishing to progress. It is acknowledged that this approach has high value both in consistency and in the experience such workers bring.

Progression at the end of a worker's ASYE Level 1 year will be determined by a panel and will be the culmination of a process which is both supportive and challenging in order to prepare workers for their future social work careers. Section 2 of this handbook gives more detailed information about our ASYE programme.

A social worker's readiness for progression to a more senior level will be decided by their Case Supervisor in conjunction with the social worker themselves with input from an Advanced Practitioner. Section 3 of this handbook will give more detailed information about the processes to be followed once the decision to apply for progression has been taken.

It is important that we do not view 'career progression' as simply a process to be 'got through' or as a tick box exercise. We believe it is important that we, (both employer and worker), take every opportunity to embed good practice; broaden skills and knowledge and evidence our good work as social workers. To do this, this document is underpinned by the requirements of the Department for Education's Key Skills Statements for Child and Family Practitioners which encourages excellent social work practice.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

We are serious about developing, supporting and encouraging our staff to be the best social workers they can be and this process seeks to support that commitment. We also want to ensure that we have talented individuals ready and willing to apply for our managerial and advanced practice posts as they arise.

Our commitment is to provide good quality practice placements for social work students, an excellent ASYE programme and a framework for continued development and learning for social workers who wish.

SECTION 1 Progression through the levels

General

Some Social Workers may wish to stay operating at Level 2 for a number of years; this may be for a variety of reasons, such as their own confidence level or comfortableness or due to other personal considerations. Some Level 3 Senior Social Workers may not wish to progress into a 'managerial' role with all the incumbent responsibilities that entails.

This does not mean our social workers cannot access opportunities to broaden their knowledge, experience or skills. We may consider lateral moves, secondments, engagement in project work, shadowing, specialist training and a myriad of other such opportunities to keep our social workers engaged, motivated and upskilled.

Newly Qualified (Level 1 Social Worker)

We have developed (and seek to continually improve) our programme of development and support for NQ staff. Our purpose in doing this is to ensure our NQ staff have the support and development they need to develop their professional competence, their skills, knowledge and capability and their confidence. NQ staff receive on-going assessment by their line manager and the Advanced Practitioner (ASYE Co-ordinator) in order that development plans stay on track and that the worker receives a rounded introduction into social work, which aims to develop and enhance their competence and confidence.

Level 2 Experienced Social Workers

On successful completion of their ASYE, social workers will progress to Level 2. In the main, Level 2 Social Workers will be expected to:

- Practice effectively and competently and with an increasing level of autonomy and independence
- Make good quality judgements and sound decisions in situations of increasing complexity, risk, uncertainty and challenge and be able to effectively explain and justify them.
- Demonstrate increasing confidence, deepening understanding and independence (but know when to ask for help, advice or support)
- Have a broader knowledge of local resource networks and how to access them
- Have a broader repertoire of responses
- Be a source of reliable and accurate knowledge and advice
- Increasingly collaborate, on equal terms, with other professionals.

See Section 2 for more details about the progression criteria from Level 1 Social Worker to Level 2 Experienced Social Worker.

Level 3 Senior Social Worker

A number of Senior Social Worker posts exist across NELC's Children's Services in the various areas of the service. Subject to successfully meeting the criteria for progression, post holders will be progressed into a Senior Social Worker vacancy, (occasionally via a competitive process if there are more workers than vacancies). In the unlikely event that a Level 3 post does not become vacant within 18 months of the Progression Panel, the decision would be subject to review (by both worker and panel) at the time a vacancy arose.

In the main, Level 3 Senior Social Workers will be expected to:

- Be autonomous in their role, capable of using own initiative, managing higher level risks & have
- advanced decision making skills
- Model professional standards and good practice to others
- Manage a caseload of predominantly the most complex, challenging and potentially contentious cases
- Chair a range of meetings and offer expert opinion both within and external to the organisation
- Start to take accountability and responsibility for other, less experienced staff, e.g. formal mentoring, case supervision etc.

See Section 3 for the progression criteria from Level 2 to Level 3 Social Worker.

Organisational Development

We have made a commitment to use various means to develop Personal Development Plans (PDP's) for our team members; this could be from information gained during your assessment process; an organisational training needs analysis; via supervision or from observation. Training targets, delivery methods and outcomes will be identified and your progress monitored through your Staff Care supervision.

It is important to us that our team members are skilled and knowledgeable about their chosen profession but also competent and motivated practitioners who are resilient and confident.

SECTION 2 Progression from Level 1 (Newly Qualified) to Level 2 (Experienced Social Worker)

Overview

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) was introduced nationally in 2012 following a review of social work in England and a recommendation by the Social Work Task Force in 2009.

The ASYE is a year-long programme designed to support newly qualified (NQ) workers to develop their professional capability and to transition successfully from their academic place of learning into work-based practice. It is expected that during the year workers will develop their skills, knowledge, experience and, as importantly, their professional confidence.

How organisations choose to facilitate the 12 month ASYE programme is up to them, but here in North East Lincolnshire we aim to provide a robust package of support which includes training, one to one and group supervision, workshops, self-directed learning, shadowing and guidance from an ASYE Co-ordinator. We are also committed to protecting a NQ's workers caseload, with an expectation of at least a 10% reduction (in comparison with an experienced Level 2 worker); this is dependent upon the needs of the service at any given time.

During your ASYE (Level 1) year with us, you will be on a Training Contract and will have a personalised Learning Agreement. Progress to an experienced social worker post (Level 2) and subsequent pay increase will be dependent on you passing the ASYE programme.

As a NQ worker in North East Lincolnshire the first four weeks of your training year will be spent with our Advanced Practitioner team who will oversee this initial induction period with us; our aim in doing this is to give you the best start with our organisation. During this period you will receive an intensive orientation into North East Lincolnshire and its procedures and processes and receive dedicated support and development. There will also be opportunities for you to shadow more experienced workers in order that you gain knowledge of practice, the local area and resources and our client base.

On completion of the four week period you will be placed within a social work team and assigned a buddy who will support your transition into their team. At this stage you will start to be allocated cases to work which will be done incrementally to allow your line manager to assess your readiness and to ensure such allocations are appropriate.

Expectations of our Newly Qualified Workers - Portfolio

To successfully progress from Level 1 to Level 2, you will be expected to complete your ASYE Portfolio during your first year with guidance and a commitment to protected time to allow you to do so. We monitor your portfolio progress during regular review meetings held at 3, 6 and 9 months with a final 12 month review panel meeting to decide on progression.

Your portfolio will be subject to both internal (in collaboration with Adult Social Work) and external (Humber Teaching Partnership) moderation to ensure that the content of the portfolio accurately reflects your journey through the ASYE programme and adequately evidences completion.

Development Days

During your first 12 months, we deliver monthly Development Days. Mornings are dedicated to enhancing your skills and knowledge (with a variety of topics and guest speakers to make your learning useful and enjoyable). Afternoons act as protected time for you to complete your ASYE paperwork or indulge in other learning opportunities which you may not get time for in your normal day to day activity. To successfully progress from Level 1 to Level 2 you will need to achieve at least 85% attendance at these Development Days (although any individual extenuating circumstances for non-compliance will be taken into account).

Mandatory Training

There are a number of mandatory or statutory training workshops that you will be expected to attend within your first year. Attendance at these workshops will be monitored within the ASYE review panel process.

Supervision

In line with the Local Government Association's Standards for Employers of Social Workers in England we have an expectation that supervision for NQ social workers will be undertaken:

Weekly for the first 6 weeks of employment (with an Advanced Practitioner / Case Supervisor)

Fortnightly for the duration of the remaining first six months of employment (with your line manager)

Monthly for the remainder of your employment with us (with your line manager)

You have a role to play in your supervision. We expect you to engage positively and proactively with your supervision and in addition attend the Group Supervision sessions undertaken by the ASYE Co-ordinator (or other Advanced Practitioner). These group supervisions are an opportunity for discussions around feedback received from yourself, other NQ's or Case Supervisors relating to practice or procedural issues and deliver another opportunity for reflective learning.

It is also beneficial if you attend the supervision session of your buddy when you are shadowing or co-working a case with them; this will enable you to further build your knowledge and skills and support your transition into a social work team.

Caseload and Workload Management

You will, with support and guidance, hold a caseload which will gradually increase in number and complexity over the duration of your first year in employment with us. Our aim is that this caseload will not exceed 90% of that expected of a Level 2 Experienced Social Worker. Your workload will be carefully managed and every attempt will be made to ensure that the work assigned to you is at a level of complexity which is appropriate to your level of knowledge, capability and experience.

During your first four weeks you will receive plenty of opportunities to shadow and/or co-work cases with more experienced workers to give you an opportunity to observe good practice and develop your own practice skills.

The Assessment Criteria

To successfully progress from Level 1 to Level 2 you will need to meet the expectations of our ASYE programme and to manage and maintain, to the required professional standards, an average caseload for NQSW's.

The following documentation will be required in your ASYE portfolio:

A completed critical reflective log and PDP from you, evidencing your journey through the ASYE programme, which makes reference to the knowledge and skills statement for Child & Family Practitioners. The critical logs should demonstrate your growth, both in practice and knowledge gained; providing examples of practice that has both being a positive or a difficult situation or challenge faced.

A completed self-assessment, (Annex 1), completed by yourself and your line manager, against the knowledge and skills statement for Child & Family Practitioners.

Three direct observations of practice, one to be completed by the ASYE Co-ordinator, one completed by direct line manager and the third to be completed by either line manager or senior social worker (Annex 2). These can be observations of any area of practice and at any stage of the ASYE programme, provided they are completed prior to the twelve month review.

A completed record of support and progressive assessment (Annex 3) from your direct line manager, this should reference the work undertaken in line with the knowledge and skills statement for child & family practitioners. Examples should be provided to outline the practice undertaken by the social worker over the course of the programme; highlighting positives, any difficult situations faced and the learning taken away from these. The report should also reference areas for further development to enable development plans to reflect this accurately. This type of learning can be used as evidence of improving competence.

Evidence of at least 85% (10 out of 12) attendance at monthly ASYE development days throughout the 12 month programme. Non-attendance will be approved for annual leave, sickness or a worker being required in court.

The Process

Your progress through the ASYE programme will be reviewed on a 3 monthly basis through a Panel Process, (see Appendix 2(2)).

The purpose of the formal review panels is to ensure that you are progressing through the ASYE programme as expected, all paperwork is up to date, your practice is continually evolving and you are being afforded all learning opportunities necessary to ensure successful completion of the programme.

The Progress Panels are a positive forum to reflect on a social worker's growth in confidence and competence as a practitioner. However they also serve as an opportunity to identify any worries or concerns regarding a social worker's practice, skills or knowledge and enable plans to be devised that will offer support to bridge the gap.

SECTION 3

Progression from Level 2 (Experienced Social Worker) to Level 3 (Senior Social Worker)

Overview

North East Lincolnshire Council value their social work staff and the work they do and are keen to support their development to more senior posts, should that be what they want to achieve. This section provides an overview of what you need to do if you wish to be considered for progression to a Level 3 Senior Social Worker post.

We aim to provide a fair and consistent assessment process in which the criteria are judged at an appropriate level. The level of performance required is a managerial decision which, in this instance, should be based upon the required performance standards of a Social Worker.

The Application

Rather than put an arbitrary timeframe on when a Social Worker can apply for progression, we are committed to enabling Social Workers to apply when they are ready to progress to the role of a Senior Social Worker. This may depend on the worker's previous work experience; their level of confidence and competence in the role of social worker or their desire to progress to a more senior role with the incumbent responsibilities.

A portfolio of evidence and supporting documentation to progress to the role of Senior Social Worker will be required to support a request for progression. Workers can start compiling their portfolio at any point after the successful completion of the ASYE year. It is expected that the evidence necessary to support an application for progression will be gained over a significant period of practice experience, which will differ from individual to individual.

When you feel in a position to formally start your application process, you will submit a written Expression of Intent, see Appendix 3(1), which should be supported by your line manager, (Appendix 3(2)), and approved by your Team Manager. That Expression of Intent sets out your intention to submit a completed application for progression (portfolio) within the next 6 months.

On occasion, a line manager may not support an application as they may feel the worker needs more experience in practice or to improve in particular areas of activity. If this is the case the line manager will use supervision, and the requirements of the progression process, to identify the areas that the Social Worker needs to develop in and discuss with them how that development can be achieved.

The Process

Once the Application of Intent has been approved, a Lead Assessor, (one of our Advanced Practitioners), will be appointed to lead and co-ordinate the process for that worker. They will have an initial meeting with the worker and their supervisor to go through the process, the criteria and the paperwork, give an initial assessment of any portfolio work completed to date and support the production of an individualised development plan. The aim is that the Lead Assessor and worker will meet at regular intervals to discuss progress against the progression criteria and discuss potential dates for completion.

There will be quarterly panel points for progression decision making. The Lead Assessor will work closely with the applicant to look at appropriate timescales based on work undertaken and still to do.

The assessment (see below) is portfolio based. You can commence your portfolio and evidence collation as soon as you progress to a Level 2 post. This will enable you to compile evidence, as you practice and learn, over a period of time.

The Assessment Criteria

The assessment will be based on your ability to meet the expectations of the knowledge and skills statement for child and family practitioners and to manage and maintain, to the required professional standards, an average caseload.

The following documentation and information will be required in the application portfolio:-

For those qualifying from 2012 onwards, evidence of successful completion of an ASYE year and an appropriate level of post qualifying experience. For those qualifying prior to 2012 an equivalent qualification and appropriate level of post qualifying experience

A completed self-assessment, (Appendix 3[3]), against the knowledge and skills statement for child & family practitioners, signed off by an approved signatory. An approved signatory may be the worker's own line manager or another Manager who has observed the worker in a particular activity, (e.g. another Case Supervisor, Advanced Practitioner, Team Manager, Manager or senior officer from another agency). The examples given should demonstrate the worker's growth as a social worker, both in practice and understanding. The examples may not always be 'positive' examples, for example, if a worker has faced a difficult situation or experienced a situation which did not work out as expected, it is acknowledged that these situations can lead to increased learning (about practice, approach or ourselves) and increased knowledge. Such learning can be used as evidence to demonstrate improving competence.

An examination, by an Advanced Practitioner, of FIVE assessments / case files from the worker's caseload. Two will be chosen by the worker and three will be chosen at random by the Lead Assessor. Attention will be given to recording standards, timeliness of assessments, completion of paperwork, decisions made, actions taken, timely closures, (where appropriate). See Appendix 3(4) for assessment criteria.

By prior arrangement with the service user and their family / carers there will be observations of TWO sequences of practice which evidence strong social work practice skills, (e.g. active participation in Case Mapping, a CIN meeting, a CORE group meeting, leading a case discussion AND completing an assessment/visit with complex issues in a service user's home). One observation will be undertaken by the Lead Assessor and the second observation will be undertaken by a Case Supervisor or Advanced Practitioner independent of the progression process. The observer(s) will submit a competency-based evaluation of the observation undertaken, (Appendices 3(5) and 3(6)).

A presentation, with written report, by the social worker, to a 3 person panel, (Lead Assessor, Case Supervisor and Senior Social Worker), regarding an anonymised case, highlighting the presenting challenges to the service user, family, carers and service. There should be evidence of objectives and desired outcomes in line with national guidance or key policy framework; the application of social work theory, methods used and legislative framework; demonstration of the ability to undertake risk assessments; evidence of working with increasing autonomy and an evaluation of what has been accomplished, (appendix 3(7)).

Contact made with the service users, family and/or carers of two of the worker's cases, chosen by the Lead Assessor, to ascertain their views of the social worker, their practice, the work completed, their engagement and their communication style, (Appendix 3(8)).

Evidence of formal or informal mentoring of inexperienced or newly appointed staff in line with agreed standards, (Appendix 3[9])

Examination of the social worker's personal development paperwork and training record to ensure satisfactory progress is being achieved and that the worker demonstrates a commitment to their own continuing personal and professional development.

The Decision

Once the portfolio of evidence has been completed, a Progression Review Panel, (consisting of the Principal Social Worker for Children & Families (chair), a Team Manager and the Lead Assessor) will assess all evidence presented to them by the Lead Assessor.

Prior to that panel the Lead Assessor will score each element of the assessment, (see Appendix 3(10) for scoring criteria). The Lead Assessor will keep secure all evidence collated during the assessment and will maintain same, in case of appeal.

The Lead Assessor will tabulate scores and provide a brief report and recommendation for discussion at the Progression Review Panel.

The worker should be prepared to attend the Progression Review Panel and respond to questions from the panel if required before a final decision is made.

After consideration of all the evidence, the panel will make a recommendation as to whether or not the applicant has been successful, see Appendix 3(11).

If progression is recommended the worker will move to a Level 3 Senior Social Worker with the accompanying grade increase to pay point JE 37.

If progression is not recommended, the application will be deferred and the applicant will be given full feedback on the areas where they did not meet the required standard, together with suggestions of how they can develop their performance in those areas. They will be eligible to apply again once three months have elapsed from the date of their unsuccessful application when they should be able to evidence their ability to now meet the areas not previously achieved.

The Appeals Process

The worker has the right to appeal against the decision – not in terms of the decision itself, but if the worker considers that the process has been incorrectly followed.

A written appeal, addressed to the Chair of the Progression Review Panel, must be lodged within ten working days of the assessment decision being received. The appeal should give clear reasons for the appeal and be able to evidence those areas where the appellant does not feel the processes was correctly administered. Within ten working days of receiving this appeal, the Chair of the original Progression Review Panel will set up an Appeals Panel.

An appeals panel, consisting of a Service Manager (Chair), Team Manager and Advanced Practitioner, (none of whom should have been involved in the process thus far), will review the process and the evidence provided by the appellant. If the appellant is required to attend this panel, (e.g. to provide

APPENDICES

SECTION TWO

- Asye Programme
- Annex 1 ASYE aelf-assessment

- Annex 2 ASYE observation of practice template
- Annex 3 Record of support & progressive assessment

SECTION THREE

- Level 2 To Level 3 Progression
- Appendix 3(1) Expression of intention
- Appendix 3(2) Line manager's statement of support
- Appendix 3(3) KSS self-assessment
- Appendix 3(4) Case file audit tool
- Appendix 3(5) Observation template (group work)
- Appendix 3(6) Observation template (practice)
- Appendix 3(7) Panel presentation scoring matrix
- Appendix 3(8) Service user feedback template
- Appendix 3(9) Evidence of mentoring template
- Appendix 3(10) Scoring matrix
- Appendix 3(11) Decision Record