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## Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Policy and Procedure

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## Purpose

The purpose of an assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) is to enable newly qualified social workers (NQSW's) to develop their professional competence, alongside their skills, knowledge and capability.

Leicestershire County Council will ensure that the appropriate induction, supervision and support is available to all NQSW's during their ASYE. The ASYE also gives the Council the opportunity to assess a NQSW's suitability as a permanent or temporary member of staff and for NQSW's to demonstrate their ability to effectively and efficiently perform their duties. It has been designed to be used in all scenarios where a qualified and registered social worker is employed.

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## Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all NQSW's within Leicestershire County Council with less than 1 years' post qualification experience as a social worker, who have not completed an ASYE elsewhere.

They will be employed under the conditions of service of the following bodies:

- National Joint Council for Local Government Service Employees

This policy and procedure is only applicable to employees on a fixed term contract of 12 months and above and permanent employees.

This policy and procedure is not applicable to casual workers or agency workers.

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## Principles

- The Council's commitment to equality of opportunity will be observed at all times during the operation of this policy and procedure. This will ensure that employees are treated fairly and without discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sex, marital status or civil partnership, disability, age, sexual orientation, trade union membership or activity, political or religious belief, maternity or pregnancy, gender re-assignment and unrelated criminal conviction.
- It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the operation of the procedure for employees with a disability, for example adjustments to timescales or specialist assistance at meetings.

- An employee who demonstrates unsatisfactory performance during the ASYE will be given the opportunity to improve. If the employee's performance remains unsatisfactory, the employee will have their employment terminated.
- The ASYE may be ended earlier if serious concerns arise regarding the employee's capability or conduct or in exceptional circumstances extended following discussion with the Practice Mentor Assessor (PMA), Line Manager and employee concerned in exceptional circumstances.
- Line Managers are responsible for setting goals in accordance with the requirements of the ASYE and will participate in reviews of employee's progress. PMA's will support the employee through reflective supervision and arrange reviews of employee's progress with the employee and line manager. Any shortfall in performance will be pointed out to the employee concerned.
- An employee dismissed during the ASYE will have the right of appeal against such a dismissal
- There will not be an opportunity to retake the ASYE via a national programme or to gain a certificate at a later stage with any employer.
- Where a NQSW moves to Leicestershire County Council part way through completing an ASYE they will not have to start again at the beginning of the ASYE. When appointing a NQSW in this circumstance the council should decide on the sufficiency of evidence NQSWs present for ASYE assessment, including any statements from their previous employer. Consideration needs to be given regarding the remaining elements that they need to complete in order to pass the ASYE.

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## Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Line managers</b>	To be involved in the initial meeting with the employee and PMA establishing a clear learning agreement. To manage the ASYE, allocating appropriate workload for a NQSW to ensure requirements of the ASYE are met. To participate in reviews of employee's progress as agreed with the PMA. To take the lead in the 3, 6, 11 and 12 month review meetings, with support from the PMA. In addition document reviews and complete appropriate paperwork as necessary. The Line Manager will also undertake one of the direct observations and complete a feedback report.
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<b>Practice Mentor Assessors</b>	Practice Mentor Assessors must be suitably qualified experienced social workers. The PMA will support the employee in their learning and reflection during the ASYE. Arrange reviews of employee's progress throughout the ASYE alongside the line manager as necessary. Complete appropriate paperwork and liaise with the line manager as necessary.
<b>Employees</b>	Employees are required to pass the ASYE and will be given help and encouragement to achieve this.
<b>HR Services</b>	The HR Services team will advise and support managers and PMA's in the application of the ASYE.
<b>Trade Union or other Representative</b>	<p>All employees have the right to be accompanied at a hearing or appeal hearing. The employee may be accompanied by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A work colleague</li> <li>• A Trade Union Official.</li> </ul> <p>The work colleague or the Trade Union Representative can attend any meetings/hearings to support the employee, but is not to answer any questions asked of the employee in these situations unless agreed by all parties.</p>
<b>ASYE Hearing Panel</b>	The panel will be chaired by a senior manager, who has no prior involvement in the employee's case, and accompanied by two other panel members; another independent manager and a representative from HR.
<b>ASYE Hearing Appeal</b>	The appeal panel will be chaired by a senior officer; and accompanied by two other panel members; an independent senior manager and a representative from HR.

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## The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

The assessed and supported year in employment is a year long programme designed to help newly qualified social workers develop their professional capability. It is expected that during the assessed and supported year in employment NQSW's will combine learning from their degree and develop their skills, knowledge and experience in the workplace. As part of the ASYE, NQSW's will be expected to undertake the Award for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. A learning agreement will be agreed at the beginning of the ASYE which includes the provision of regular and focussed support and development. The ASYE provides a mechanism to outline what is expected of the employee by the end of the first year in employment.

## **Criteria for undertaking the assessed and supported year in employment**

Employees appointed to Social Worker posts who have less than one years' experience post qualification and who have not completed an assessed and supported year elsewhere, will be required to undertake the ASYE with Leicestershire County Council. The Line Manager has the discretion to extend this time period if an individual has taken specific time out of their career e.g. gap year/maternity leave.

### **Supervision, workload and protected time**

The following will be discussed and agreed with the employee as part of the learning agreement at the initial meeting with the line manager and PMA.

There should be reflective supervision at least once a week for the first six weeks of employment then at least once every two weeks for the remainder of the first six months and a minimum of once per month, thereafter. The reflective supervision sessions include critical reflection, practice discussions, progress with module planning, personal learning and development and any other relevant issues.

Following this there should be interim reviews at 3 and 6 months, leading to a final decision at/around 12 months. Approximately 1 month prior to completion, a preliminary judgement should be made by the Line Manager with involvement from the PMA. The employee should be informed of this. The interim reviews will focus on areas including progress, planning and review of the personal development plan.

Workload will over the course of the year be proportional to 90% of what is expected of a confident social worker in the same role in their second or third year of employment, weighted over the course of the year by things such as complexity, risk and growing proficiency.

Social workers should be given protected time for personal development, which normally equates to 10% over the course of the year. The line manager will ensure that employees are given adequate protected time and that this is set out in the learning agreement.

### **Assessment**

Line Managers are responsible overall for the decisions about an employee's success and failure in the ASYE. The Line Manager must ensure that judgements and processes for assessment are:

- **Accurate** – consistent with the expectations of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and a genuine reflection of the NQSW's performance

- **Valid** – based on evidence reflecting the breadth of the NQSW's work throughout the ASYE and on appropriate processes for the NQSW's development and assessment over the year
- **Robust** – judgements and processes are checked, confirmed and consistent within Leicestershire County Council; judgements and processes are reliable and defensible if scrutinised or challenged either inside or outside the organisation.

Employees will be supported in their learning and reflection by their Practice Mentor Assessor and Line Manager. The PMA will be a suitably experienced and qualified social worker who will be involved in the initial meeting, reflective supervision sessions and monthly supervision sessions throughout the ASYE.

Alongside the PMA's role, your line manager will contribute to the formative assessment through the review process which includes the initial meeting, and the 3, 6, and 12 months meetings. They will participate in reviews of the employee's progress as agreed with the PMA. The Line Manager will also be involved in the 11 month preliminary judgement alongside the PMA.

The line manager and PMA will assess the employee's practice in relation to the 9 domains of the PCF and will need to be familiar with the principles of holistic assessment.

Line Managers and PMA's will have additional responsibilities as outlined in the Award for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

At the end of the ASYE year, the line manager and PMA must complete a final assessment of the NQSW's knowledge, skills and performance. In order to pass the ASYE it must be confirmed that the NQSW is performing at an appropriate level that allows for confirmation as a social worker.

DeMontfort University will be involved as a moderator for written assignments to ensure that the ASYE scheme gains national currency and ensuring that standards are kept high.

### **Timescales**

At the start of the ASYE the line manager, PMA and NQSW will complete a learning agreement which should take account of the NQSW's normal pattern of work. The intention is for NQSW's to complete the ASYE within 12 months, excluding absences for substantial sickness or maternity leave. Where extension beyond 12 months is necessary, the NQSW will be expected to complete the ASYE within 2 years of commencing the ASYE. This would allow flexibility for extension where the employee's progress is not meeting the required standard to pass the ASYE. Any such extension should be limited to a maximum of 12 months, and ordinarily should be considerably less. The ASYE will not be extended on grounds of competence or capability.

If necessary for part time staff, line managers may adjust the timescales for the interim reviews and final assessment so they occur at appropriate points. The adjustments should take into account the intention to complete the ASYE within 2 years of commencing the scheme.

If a NQSW has a period of [sickness](#) absence or there is a potential [conduct](#) issue, the process for dealing with this is outlined below.

### **Learning Agreement**

The template of the learning agreement can be found in the Award for the Assessed and Supported year in Employment student handbook. Line Managers should ensure the following areas are covered as part of the learning agreement:

- Details of the frequency of reflective supervision
- A statement on the reduced workload during the first year of employment
- A personal development plan
- A time allocation for personal development.

### **Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)**

The PCF is divided into 9 domains and sets out the capabilities that a NQSW should be using in their day to day work as they progress through their assessed and supported year in employment. The key principle for assessment is that evidence gathered from a range of work must be sufficient to demonstrate how the NQSW has met the 9 domains at ASYE level. Assessment should be accurate, valid and robust.

The nine elements of attainment include professionalism, values and ethics, diversity, justice, knowledge, judgement, critical reflection and analysis, contexts and organisations and professional leadership.

### **Outcomes and certification**

Outcomes should be recorded by employers and notified to The College of Social Work (with candidate's permission), which is planning to hold a national record of and issue a certificate to those who have successfully completed ASYE.

There will not be an opportunity to retake the ASYE via a national programme or to gain a certificate at a later stage should an individual fail.

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## Procedure

Regular reviews will ensure that any areas of unsatisfactory performance are recognised and dealt with before major problems develop.

PMA's and line managers will advise the social worker of the ASYE review process and that the required standard must be reached for all of the criteria within the PCF by the final review.

At all stages throughout the procedure any concerns regarding the employee's performance should be raised with them at the earliest possible opportunity. If an employee's performance is not meeting the required standard, an earlier review should be arranged and if the standard required of the employee remains unsatisfactory after 2 reviews the line manager may move to a formal hearing. It is recommended that a minimum of 4 weeks is allowed between reviews.

Whilst review meetings should not require the employee to be accompanied by a trade union or work colleague, line managers should not refuse such a request if the employee feels they need support.

### **3 Month Interim Review Meeting**

The Line Manager and PMA together will meet with the social worker, no later than 3 months from their start date, to review the ASYE. They will ensure that the required standard and objectives are being met for the academic and operational elements of the ASYE. They will feedback positive and/or negative issues, with examples where possible, re-affirming the required standard that must be reached for all of the criteria by the Final Review Meeting.

### **Satisfactory Performance**

Where the employee's performance is meeting the required standards of the ASYE, the Line Manager and PMA will confirm this and set a date for the 6 month interim review period. The reflective supervision will continue during the ASYE.

### **Unsatisfactory Performance**

Where the employee's performance is not meeting the required standards of the ASYE, the Line Manager, with assistance from the PMA must:

- Re-affirm the necessary standards
- Put in place support measures to assist the employee to improve
- Inform employee of reasons and possible consequences
- Continue with the reflective supervision sessions required within the ASYE.



### **6 Month Interim Review**

At 6 months employment the Line Manager and PMA must again meet with the employee, review their performance to ensure they are meeting the required standards of the ASYE, and feedback positive and/or negative issues, including examples where possible.

#### **Satisfactory Performance**

- Where the required standard of performance has been achieved this will be confirmed to the employee and the reflective supervision sessions will continue.

#### **Unsatisfactory Performance**

Where the employee's performance is not meeting the required standards of the ASYE, the Line Manager with assistance from the PMA must:

- Re-affirm the necessary standards
- Put in place support measures to assist the employee to improve
- Inform employee of reasons and possible consequences
- Continue with the reflective supervision sessions required within the ASYE.

### **11 Month Preliminary Judgement**

Line Managers and PMA's are asked to consider all of the evidence gathered at this point and make a preliminary judgement.

If the employee's performance is not of the required standard to pass the ASYE at this stage, the line manager and PMA should meet with the employee to discuss areas of concern. Line Managers, with assistance from the PMA must:

- Re-affirm the necessary standards
- Put in place support measures to assist the employee to improve
- Inform employee of reasons and possible consequences
- Continue with the reflective supervision sessions required within the ASYE.

### **12 Month Final Review**

At around 12 months a final review will be arranged to ensure a thorough assessment of the ASYE and a decision be made to recommend a pass, fail or deferral (with reasons) of the ASYE.

#### **Satisfactory Performance**

Where the performance has met the required standard and met the criteria outlined within the ASYE the employee will be confirmed in post.

#### **Unsatisfactory Performance**

Where the performance is not meeting the required standard and the criteria within the ASYE has not been met a hearing will be arranged.

**Extension to ASYE**

Employers are not expected to extend completion of ASYE on grounds of competence or capability.

This extension can only be agreed provided that the employee and the Line Manager's own Manager (or a Senior Manager within the department) are in agreement with this.

In such circumstances the Line Manager and PMA will meet with the employee at the end of the extension period to review progress; if this is acceptable the employee will be confirmed in post, if progress is not acceptable, the issue will be referred to a Formal Hearing to consider dismissal.

**Formal Hearing**

The employee must be given at least 10 working days written notice of the hearing. The notice must specify the alleged unacceptable standards of performance to enable the employee to prepare his/her response. Any relevant documents to be used in evidence must be supplied to the employee at this stage together with details of any witnesses the Line Manager will be calling.

Any documentary evidence which the employee wishes to submit together with names of witnesses they wish to call should be made available to the Panel no later than 5 days prior to the disciplinary hearing.

The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague.

**Possible Outcomes**

- The employee's performance is considered by the Panel to be of an acceptable level and the employee should be confirmed in post;
- A formal extension (timescales to be agreed to not exceed the total 2 year period) to the ASYE should be given. Following this extension there will be a Formal Review Hearing before the same panel;
- The employee's performance is of an unacceptable level. The employee fails the ASYE and is dismissed with the required notice.

The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days. In order to assist the Council to report on formal sanctions received, if the hearing outcome resulted in dismissal, it is necessary for the Chair, to email the LCC HR and Payroll, Team Leader (ESC) for Oracle to be updated.

**Appeal**

An employee has a right to appeal against dismissal. The appeal must be submitted in writing and sent to the Chair of the panel within 7 working days of receiving their letter of confirmation.

The appeal panel will be chaired by a senior officer: and accompanied by two other panel members; an independent senior manager and a representative from HR.

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## Other Factors

**Application of the Probationary Procedure during the Assessed and Supported Year**

The Probationary Procedure will not apply to those employees undertaking the ASYE.

**Application of the Capability Procedure during the Assessed and Supported Year**

For the avoidance of doubt, during the ASYE the Capability Policy and Procedure will not apply. Any concerns regarding an employee's capability within this period will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

**Absence during the Assessed and Supported Year**

In the majority of cases if an individual is absent for a substantial part of their assessed and supported year this will be taken into account in monitoring their performance and may lead to their dismissal. Cases of absence will be dealt with in accordance with the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure.

**Conduct related disciplinary issues during the Assessed and Supported Year**

Conduct issues will be dealt with in accordance with the [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#).

*[Note](#)*

*From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2013 the following paragraph was removed from this policy & procedure, agreement was not reached with the recognised trade unions:*

***Career Progression***

*Managers should be aware, in line with the social workers contract, a grade increase is usually given at 9 months. Managers should ensure performance is satisfactory at this stage. If a manager has any concerns regarding this they should seek the advice of Human Resources.*

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