

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

1	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
2	Date:	15 April 2013
3	Title:	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
4	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5 Summary

- 5.1 The national Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) scheme for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) is being implemented across the Directorate; this builds on the previous NQSWs schemes with the aim of ensuring that NQSWs receive consistent support in their first year of employment. Implementation has involved working through and resolving a number of complex human resource management / development issues and ensuring a robust and defensible support and assessment process is in place.
- 5.2 An ASYE e-handbook has been devised to support the delivery of ASYE including protocols for supervisors and assessors to follow, defined roles and responsibilities of all those involved in ASYE, and a planned training programme for both NQSWs and their managers.

6 Recommendations

- **Cabinet Member receives this paper and supports the implementation of ASYE across the Health and Wellbeing Department.**

7 **Proposals and Details**

- 7.1 In September 2012 a new single sector-wide Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) scheme succeeded the existing newly qualified social worker (NQSW) schemes for adults' and children's services. ASYE aims to ensure that NQSWs receive consistent support in their first year of employment so that they are able to become confident, competent professionals. ASYE's most significant differences to the previous schemes are that the outcome for the NQSW are pass or fail, with those failing being unable to use the protected title of 'Social Worker', and successful completion is certificated by the College of Social Work.
- 7.2 Not surprisingly, the introduction of a one-year ASYE scheme raised a number of human resource management / development complexities for the Directorate which needed careful consideration before implementation. A task and finish group (T&FG) was therefore constituted by the Health and Wellbeing Department's Senior Management Team to implement ASYE.
- 7.3 Working through the complexities, the T&FG has developed an ASYE e-handbook to support the roll-out of ASYE across the Directorate. Substantial time has been invested to ensure that the e-Handbook and its contents deliver a robust process of support and evidence based assessment for NQSWs that are, above all, defensible against any challenged 'fail' outcome judgements. Protocols have been devised and roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the support and assessment of NQSWs form the e-Handbook 'skeleton' on which the 'flesh' of templates and guidance have been added, and may continue to be added.
- 7.4 At the start of the ASYE the NQSW will complete a learning agreement which will describe how the Council will support them through reflective supervision, workload reduction (10%), a personal development plan, and protected time for personal development (10%). Assessment will be against the Professional Capabilities Framework at ASYE level using the principles of progressive holistic assessment with formative assessment being undertaken at three, six and nine months and final summative assessment at eleven/twelve months.

8 **Finance**

- 8.1 £2,000 funding is available from Skills for Care for each NQSW; it is intended to assist employers to implement an ASYE programme, provide regular support for their NQSWs, and assess each NQSW during their first year of employment.

9 Risks and Uncertainties

- 9.1 ASYE guidance is such that all staff employed after September 2012 who are within two years of qualification should undertake ASYE. Those who began on NQSW before April 2012 should complete NQSW. Those who have been employed between April and September 2012 and began on NQSW may either complete the NQSW or transfer to ASYE, provided that their employer feels that they can meet all the ASYE standards and could defend a fail outcome.
- 9.2 If workers are not eligible to undertake ASYE the onus is on the Council, the employer, to ensure that the Social Worker employed is able to meet the standards that would be expected of an ASYE. Those Social Workers employed who can not therefore demonstrate completion of a previous NQSW scheme, and were eligible to do so, will be required to successfully complete the ASYE programme to be employed by the Council, although it can not be called ASYE and they will not be able to gain a certificate from the College of Social Work on successful completion.
- 9.3 The following actions have been taken forward by the T&FG to robustly implement ASYE and mitigate risk to the Council when employing Social Workers:
 - 9.3.1 Recruitment – the process of selection has been strengthened including questions to identify if an NQSW completed or did not complete a NQSW scheme and why, if they are required to undertake the ASYE, and if they have previously failed ASYE. Appointments in teams of any NQSW may be limited to one NQSW per team, in recognition of the demands placed on the Team Manager who will be required to provide frequent reflective supervision and assessment including direct observations.
 - 9.3.2 Contract - NQSWs will be issued with a non-standard contract of employment that has a requirement to satisfactorily complete the ASYE. This is a contract that is currently used by Resources Directorate for teaching professionals who have a similar requirement to meet capabilities within their first year of practice. This will allow termination of contract if the ASYE outcome is fail.
 - 9.3.3 Grievance – The Council is currently reviewing all of its human resources policies. Officers have been advised about the rights of ASYE to appeal against any ‘fail’ outcome decisions and consider any appropriate, specific clauses into policy. It is expected that the Probationary procedure is used during the first six months of employment with the move to the Capability Procedure after this period.

9.3.4 Absence Cover – a protocol has been devised to ensure that appropriate alternative support and assessment arrangements are put in place for the NQSW during extended period of absence of their Team Manager.

9.3.5 Assessment – Internal moderation arrangements have been put in place at all stages of the three formative assessments and at the summative assessment, with the final assessment to involve external moderation (currently under discussion with neighbouring authorities).

10 Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 An effective ASYE programme is central to ensuring that the Directorate is able to attract, recruit and retain NQSWs to work in Rotherham and support their development throughout their first year in assessed employment. An effective ASYE programme contributes to a capable, competent and skilled workforce.

11 Background Papers and Consultation

11.1 This paper has been produced in liaison with the Directorate's HR Business partner.

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