



# **Assessed and Supported Year in Employment**

## **Annual Report October 2023**

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ASYE Coordinators

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## Overview

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is a model of good practice that Wirral remains committed to providing for its Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). It is designed to provide additional support and opportunity for NQSWs to enable them to make a successful transition from their social work degree courses into employment. Ensuring that social workers are equipped and ready to practice influences positive outcomes for children and young people who are in need of help and support during their formative years. It also sets a strong foundation of professional practice which in turn influences continued professional development of the social worker and work force.

Wirral uses the new ASYE portfolio designed by Skills for Care as a template for the programme and NQSW progress is reviewed periodically throughout the year. Wirral is a member of the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP). The CMSWTP has utilised the Skills for Care portfolio to propose a Partnership model with the aim of establishing a Partnership ASYE experience with employer individuality. The portfolio has been designed to support neurodiverse learning styles. This has been active for 12 months now and feedback was mixed in that the template when first presented is considerable. NQSWs and assessors have been supported in focusing on quarterly targets to achieve tasks. There is currently a working group within CMSWTP exploring ways to reduce the portfolio.

In April 2023 the ASYE Coordinator post converted to being a job share position. Sandra Williams has reduced her hours and Rachael Clay has joined to ensure that the programme has a full time compliment of support. Rachael's most recent position was as Consultant Social Worker for the Frontline programme and she has brought several new initiatives which have been invested in the programme.

As of 31.8.23 there were 24 NQSWs actively involved in the programme with another 17 to be registered over the next couple of months who are awaiting SWE registration. The NQSWs are split across Assessment, Child Protection/Court, and Permanence. This includes 2 dedicated NQSW teams. One NQSW is placed in the Integrated Front Door (IFD). The continued placement of NQSWs in IFD is not supported by the coordinators moving forwards as the individual exposure to social work practice is considered too narrow. There are no NQSWs in the Fostering service. There is 1 NQSW employed by Wirral at Adoption in Merseyside following the programme. Previously Wirral has supported NQSW colleagues placed in Children with Disabilities Team, this provision is now available in house to those NQSWs.

This last year has seen Wirral targeting the recruitment of NQSWs within a 'grow our own' model. A review of the NQSW team was undertaken internally and determined a second ASYE team. This was supported by independent overview from CMSWTP. Our NQSWs are involved in Recruitment events and have contributed to the Social Work in Wirral website information videos. Evidence from recent interviews confirms that prospective NQSWs are accessing our website and coordinators to discuss ASYE prior to interview.



Wirral dedicated  
ASYE team overview.

17 NQSWs completed their ASYE in this reporting period and 14 have remained with Wirral. 1 NQSW left prior to completing their ASYE. Reasons for staff leaving were captured in their

exit interviews (career re-evaluation, agency role). There have been 10 NQSWs who have experienced maternity leave or extended sick leave during the period which has impacted on ASYE completion.

The ASYE programme continues to be robust and timely, with review, completion dates and targets set at the Learning Agreement meeting at the start of the ASYE and reviewed during the year. This meeting is overseen by 1 of the ASYE Coordinators. ASYE Practice Development Days have been introduced from September following a consultation with the current cohort about their preferences for support and development. Practice Development Days are 1 day per month with an element of training, systemic reflective supervision and dedicated portfolio time. The NQSW is then able to book another day during the month for personal development time. NQSWs are now required to attend 75% of the ASYE development days in addition to completing mandatory training. The NQSW and/or Assessor are responsible for informing the ASYE Coordinator of any change to the programme timetable. Drift and delay is more focused and extensions to the programme now need to be agreed by the Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality. The programme aims to enrol an NQSW within 6 weeks of beginning employment.

Monthly reports to Operational Leads and Heads of Service continue to be helpful in identifying progress and drift. This report highlight the focus of the team managers to maintain the ASYE offer of 15 cases per NQSW.

ASYE assessors now have their own forum to access support and professional development. This has been well received with many contributing to the sessions. Through this forum we will provide support and training to ensure that assessment of NQSWs is equitable across the service. This will further support the general development of the workforce and service delivery.

Completion of ASYE is now firmly embedded in the Career Progression Framework. Four weeks post ASYE Moderation the progression framework is discussed with the social worker, evidence requirements are outlined for the social worker for them to share with their manager and plan for making an application within an agreed timeframe.

Wirral continues to be a part of a longitudinal study. *DfE study: Recruitment and Retention Among Local Authority Child and Family Social Workers – ASYE\_sample*. The coordinators provide data as and when requested and attend ongoing briefings.

Following the successful Skills for Care Monitoring Visit in November 2022 Wirral has been invited to contribute to a national share learning and evaluation process.

### **Actions from Previous Report**

The ASYE programme has supported the recruitment of NQSWs. Our offer is well known in the CMSWTP and Universities and our current and previous NQSW staff are our greatest asset in respect of sharing our ASYE programme and support. They have been willing to be part of recruitment activity and to contribute to the Social Work in Wirral website.

The national focus of recruitment to social work positions and their retention has remained on the agenda. Wirral has made a determined focus to recruit NQSWs. This is an area in which we achieve well. Building on from this, our focus has been to support the Grow Our Own model with training, support and career development through the ASYE programme and Career Progression Framework. Additionally the visibility of ASYE coordinators around the workforce and a direct encouragement of NQSWs to work from the office as much as possible further support the NQSW to develop a more resilient approach to their work.

The new Skills for Care Portfolio has been in use for 12 months. Wirral Coordinators were involved with CMSWTP in creating a neurodiverse template that has been well received. Initial response to the relaunched portfolio incurred some resistance given its template length. However, with the guidance from the coordinators and the support of assessors the portfolio seems to be understood and less daunting for NQSWs.

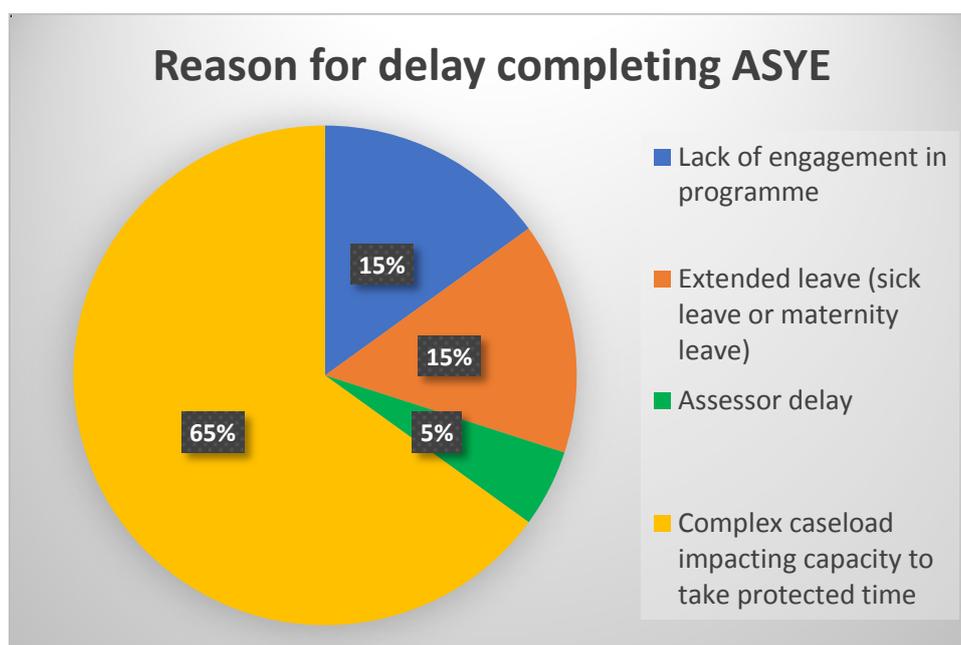
### **ASYE Cohort Activity Data 1.9.22 to 31.8.23**

Cohort No.	Active on programme	Enrolled during period	Moderated	Outstanding	Left before completion	Left within 3 months of completion
7	0	n/a	1	0	0	1
8	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
9	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10	5	n/a	3	1	1	1
11	19	n/a	12	3	4	1
12	12	12	na	na	na	na
13	6	<i>19 NQSWs to be enrolled post 01.09.23</i>				

A priority for the year ahead is to address the delay in completing the ASYE programme faced by a number of NQSW's (see graph below). In considering what the reasons for delay are for the current cohort has enabled the ASYE coordinators to address specific issues faced by a number of NQSW's.

Introduction of the monthly face to face Practice Development Days have enabled training needs to be addressed and additional support around emotional resilience/moral injury to be provided to the cohort. Monthly ASYE drop-ins are also facilitated every month so that NQSW's can seek support from the ASYE Coordinator with specific elements of the portfolio and/or emotional wellbeing.

The ASYE Co-ordinators will continue to liaise with individual team managers around caseloads and the issues affecting NQSW's taking their protected time. As per the ASYE officer, the protected personal development time equates to half a day per week. This time is vital in ensuring that NQSW's are able to complete evidence in a timely manner for their portfolio.



## Support for NQSWs

Prior to the start of ASYE each NQSW is given the opportunity to discuss their individual support needs with the coordinator. The coordinator outlines the varied support choices provided by the local authority and liaises with assessors and managers to ensure the correct support is provided in a timely manner.

The buddy system remains active and post ASYE staff are always willing to support our NQSWs and provide them with service information, shadowing opportunities etc.

The ASYE Teams Chat goes from strength to strength and is very well used by our NQSWs. The Chat is a model for NQSWs supporting each other i.e., Peer to peer support. All NQSWs are welcomed to the chat as soon as they start and ASYE success is celebrated too, alongside such things as “who can I contact for...?”. Several have commented that the Chat has helped them realise that they have knowledge and skills to share with others, which when feeling particularly de-skilled as a new social worker has been a valuable affirmation for them. High Five Friday has also been introduced on the Chat which is an opportunity for NQSW's to share things from their working week that they are proud of. This celebration of successes has been positive in building morale across the ASYE cohort.



The monthly drop-in is another source of support where NQSW's can interact with one another and the ASYE Coordinator. This poster has also been shared with Team Managers and ASYE Assessors to enable them to signpost.

All past and current NQSWs have been provided with direct work tools in the form of resource bags and books including; *Morris and the Bundle of Worries*, *Elfa and the Box of Memories* and *A Safe Place for Rufus*. Emotional Resilience postcards (Biggart et al, 2016) have also been shared as a model of reflection for NQSW's.

## ASYE Practice Development Days

It was noted that attendance at ASYE sessions had reduced over the last period. Delivering sessions virtually allowed for self-interpretation in respect of attendance. From September 2023 ASYE Development sessions have been relaunched, now being 1 full day per month, face to face and will compliment the main training offer. The expectation is that the NQSW will attend a minimum of 75% of these Practice Development Days. Attendance will be

reported to assessors and/or managers. This will allow for the NQSW to request another day during the month for personal development time.

In building an itinerary for the Practice Development Days, the current ASYE cohort were consulted and feedback after each Practice Development Day informs subsequent sessions. The NQSW's have been passionate about contributing to how these days look which is giving them greater ownership and commitment to the ASYE programme. The Practice Development Days follow the format;

- Team building: this is especially important for those not within the ASYE dedicated teams and has increased a sense of belonging within Wirral. This has provided each NQSW a secure base in which to practice.
- In-house training: team managers have been consulted to understand training needs of the ASYE cohort. Topics include; emotional resilience/moral injury, anti-racist practice, private fostering, pre-proceedings, private law, public law, analytical writing and child exploitation.
- Systemic Case reflection: each month, an NQSW will volunteer to talk through a case and supported by the cohort to reflect and build hypotheses. The discussion is supported by a Systemic Genogram which can be added to case records.
- Portfolio workshop: designated time to work on the ASYE portfolio with the support of peers and the ASYE Coordinators.



Training



ASYE Practice



ASYE Practice



ASYE Practice

Programme20232024Development Day 1 - Development Day 2 - Development Day 3 -



### **ASYE Practice Development Day – September**

Bloom Building is used as a venue which is a relaxed community space and the home of Open Door mental health charity. Funds from the ASYE budget generated from Skills for Care to pay for the venue hire goes directly to the Open Door charity.



### **ASYE Practice Development Day – October**

A panel of Social Workers who have recently completed the ASYE came to talk with the NQSW's about their experiences. Feedback was really positive about this session.

## **Moderation Meetings**

17 NQSWs have successfully completed ASYE in this review period. There have been no NQSWs who have not passed.

To complete the ASYE programme the NQSW must be supported by their assessor and present their ASYE Portfolio to the Moderation Panel.

Prior to being forwarded to the Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality who chairs the Internal Moderation Panel the portfolio is quality assured by the coordinator. The Internal Moderation Template is prepared by the ASYE coordinator with any additional comments added at moderation.

The Internal Moderation Panel has a Terms of Reference and an agreed agenda with the aim of providing consistency in decision making across the programme. The NQSW is invited to verbally review the year, highlighting areas of confident practice and areas for continued improvement. The NQSW is expected to be able to refer to the legislative framework of the organisation/service alongside internal procedures and practice. They should also demonstrate their knowledge of the work and values of the wider organisation of the employer.

The assessor is invited to attend to support the NQSW and is verbally asked to confirm their recommendation and its rationale. The ASYE coordinator is invited to comment on the agency's approach to the programme and highlight any issues.

The NQSW is advised on the day of the Moderation outcome.

There is no requirement in the ASYE programme for the NQSW to be knowledgeable on the whole of Children's Services. NQSWs are however, expected to have a sound understanding of their service area, and the child's journey and daily lived experience.

## **Equality and Diversity**

As part of induction to Wirral all NQSWs are mandatorily required to complete Equity and Diversity Training. A further training package is being explored to facilitate a safe learning environment to explore understanding. Each NQSW is advised of the range of corporate groups and forums that they may choose to access. Learning styles and needs are discussed with the NQSW prior to beginning ASYE to ensure that there is no delay in accessing and providing support and is revisited at the Learning Agreement Meeting.

As part of the CMSWTP Wirral supports the equality and diversity data reporting. The coordinator was part of a task and finish group that has formulated the new portfolio to offer a more neurodiverse format.

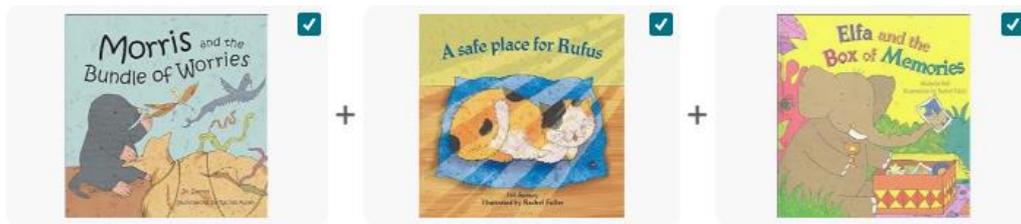
## **Feedback on the ASYE Programme 2022 to 2023**

At the end of each ASYE programme each NQSW and Assessor is requested to complete written feedback. They are asked to comment on their ASYE experience. More written feedback than previous years has been received with most NQSWs reporting a satisfactory experience overall.

## **Finance**

### **ASYE Income from Skills for Care 1.9.22 to 31.8.23**

The Skills for Care funding is a government grant and is used to support the development of the programme. For example, payments made to assessors, purchase of direct workbooks and literacy resources, room hire for development days and on costs. The following books have been provided to all NQSW's currently in the ASYE cohort and those that completed ASYE within the last 2 years.



Grant income for the period is £27,000. The coordinators continue to work with finance to determine budget activity. Recently we have been successful in identifying our own ASYE budget which will more clearly support income and expenditure.

## **Moving Forward.**

An Action Plan for 2023/2024 is now required to secure funding from Skills for Care which has been completed and ready for uploading when the Portal allows. In brief, the targets agreed by Assistant Director Kerry Mehta and notified to Skills for Care are:

### **Relaunch ASYE Practice Development Days to include a space for an ASYE forum and Action Learning Sets (reflective spaces).**

As stated previously, a review of the current support sessions for NQSW's highlighted that attendance and engagement could improve. A feedback session took place with the NQSW cohort and ASYE Coordinators in March 2023 whereby NQSW's stated their preferences for how support sessions can be shaped moving forward. This feedback has contributed to the development and relaunch of support sessions which will take place one day per month and start in September 2023. The sessions will move from being virtual to in-person which NQSW's were positive about.

Support session dates have been shared with NQSW's for September 2023 until July 2024 so they can protect this time in their diary. These dates have also been shared with Team Managers so they can provide cover for these days as this was identified as a barrier for attendance at previous sessions.

Support sessions will include guided discussion around the ASYE portfolio, end of ASYE presentations (for those that opt for this over the assignment), in-house and commissioned training, reflective spaces (action learning sets), Research in Practice webinars, ASYE forum and networking opportunities.

There is an expectation, supported by Senior Managers, that all ASYE Support Sessions are mandatory. In order to complete their ASYE, NQSW's will need to attend a minimum of 75% of all support sessions.

### **Further embed anti-racist practice and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in to the ASYE training plan for 2023-24.**

It was identified within the Skills for Care Quality Assurance Review in November 2022 that NQSW's at times struggle to discuss issues around diversity and cultural needs. Whilst training is offered, it does not appear to be meeting the needs of the current ASYE cohort. Therefore, specific Action Learning Sets with a focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will be offered within the relaunched Support Sessions. It is hoped that a smaller group, specifically for NQSW's, will create an environment where discussion and curiosity can be encouraged.

Resources from the Cheshire and Merseyside Teaching Partnership will be utilised for supporting NQSW's with implementing anti-racist practice which will be shared in addition to the Local Authority's agenda around anti-racist practice.

Further areas of support in this area can be garnered from the Skills for Care forums (including GEMS forum) and Research in Practice resources. NQSW's will be signposted to these forums, and this will be explored further within the monthly ASYE Support Sessions. Within the ASYE induction, the ASYE Co-ordinators signpost NQSW's to the staff networking groups that currently run to promote inclusion and equity within the organisation and ASYE cohort.

### **Review the offer provided to ASYE Assessors in terms of training and networking opportunities with an aim to raise professional accountability and pride within this role.**

The ASYE Co-Ordinators have reviewed the current training offer provided to ASYE Assessors. A lot of the training currently is offered virtually by way of YouTube videos. Whilst the feedback around the usefulness of these videos has been positive, it does not always lend itself to meeting the needs of all learning styles.

Therefore, in order to provide a bespoke training offer to the learning needs of all our ASYE Assessors, we are planning to review and update the training that is delivered. Resources from the CMSWTP will be utilised in developing workshops to assist ASYE Assessors in areas they identified as needing support;

- Understanding the new portfolio template.
- Breaking down the Knowledge and Skills Statement and Professional Capabilities Framework so there is clarity on how they can be applied to professional development for NQSW's.
- Reflective supervision tools.
- ASYE Assessor Forum

In achieving the goal of finalising all ASYE portfolios within a 12-month period, it is recognised that the confidence and competence of our ASYE Assessors is integral to this. We want to raise the professional profile of the ASYE Assessors in Wirral and provide them with a space to shape the ASYE programme in Wirral through local and national forums.



ASYE Action plan  
2023-24.docx

Sandra Williams and Rachael Clay

ASYE Coordinators

November 2023