

Chapter 1

Introducing the assessed and supported year in employment into our organisation.

Chapter 1 has been supporting the delivery of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) process with their newly qualified social workers (NQSWs). The organisation believes the process has had an important impact on the quality of their service delivery.

Background

Chapter 1 is a private independent charity in Southampton that provides supported housing for single young people aged 16 - 25 who are homeless or living in a precarious situation.

Through their membership of the SHIP (Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of White and Portsmouth City Council) Social Work Education Network (SWEN), Chapter 1 has received significant support with the introduction of ASYE programme.

Chapter 1 employs 2 social workers within their team and both of these individuals have completed the ASYE process.

Although Chapter 1 does not require their staff to have any specialist qualifications, they recognise that social workers can bring new up to date knowledge, skills and ideas that may be of benefit to the service.



Chapter 1 have worked with the local universities and offered student placements for several years. The creation of these links resulted in Chapter 1 being introduced to other social work employers and expertise, resulting in them forming a SHIP SWEN Partnership. This partnership led to involvement in the delivery/moderation of Southampton City Council's ASYE Programme and to Chapter 1 NQSW's joining the statutory sector for agreed taught days and learning sets.

What we wanted to achieve

When making the decision to participate in the ASYE, Chapter 1 hoped that links with the statutory sector would be enhanced: enabling them to build better working relationships and break down some barriers between both sectors.

Chapter 1 also hoped that this would lead towards a better understanding of the service that they can offer, including their expectations and limitations. They anticipated that in the longer term, this would have a positive impact on the outcomes for the young people in our care.

Chapter 1 also expected that, with the extra support on offer through the ASYE, the social workers in their team would be able to lead other staff by developing a more holistic and consistent approach to practice. An example would be helping young people to settle within the service and in the management of some of the chaotic behaviour displayed.

Through this work, Chapter 1 wanted to recognise the important contribution that registered social workers can make within their organisation, by demonstrating a commitment to their continuing professional development. They wanted to retain staff to stay in their service in the longer term and we felt this was one way that we could achieve this.

Although Chapter 1 is a national organisation, the ASYE programme commenced first in Southampton. Managers there hope that their experience will encourage other parts of the organisation to get involved in the future.

What we did

Once they had become members of the SHIP SWEN, it was easy for Chapter 1 to join Southampton City Council's ASYE Programme. They found this very helpful as it was clear the City had resources and knowledge that Chapter 1 would benefit from.

The NQSWs were given access to the council's ASYE taught days and learning sets which was a very positive learning opportunity for staff.

However as they are a much smaller organisation than the local authority, Chapter 1 needed to adapt their internal approach to supervision and assessment in order to meet their own organisational needs. Chapter 1 managed this by using their NQSW funding to employ an independent Practice Assessor.

The employment of the independent Practice Assessor eased pressures on the ASYE co-ordinator, by helping with the management of workloads, the holistic assessment process, and by ensuring that the NQSW's learning objectives were met and their development time was protected.

Chapter 1's membership of the SHIP SWEN has been very important in helping them to introduce the ASYE in our organisation. Through attending SWEN, they have been able to keep up to date with any forthcoming changes and developments and receive on-going support.

As an outcome of joining the Southampton City Council's Standardisation panel, Chapter 1 have gained knowledge and understanding about some of the practical difficulties encountered by others who have already embedded the programme.

What we achieved

Overall, Chapter 1's view of the ASYE to date has been positive. The project has enabled their workers to build relationships with other NQSWs employed by Southampton CC. Through this, the workers have a better understanding of the services provided. This helps ensure expectations are realistic and within limitations.

“The ASYE has helped improve standards and consistency. The NQSW has challenged staff practice, facilitated discussion and explored some of the difficulties staff experience when implementing procedures.”

Jane Mathews Project Worker

The extra support offered to the NQSWs on the programme has also proved to be of benefit to the service. They have grown in knowledge and confidence and this is very apparent in their practice. They feel more comfortable to lead by example in having a consistent approach when dealing with the client group and demonstrating good organisational skills. This has resulted positively for the client group. Offering continual development for staff has increased the level of service offered to the client's and improved staff morale.

Chapter 1 have seen examples of the ways in which the NQSW's participation in the ASYE has helped challenge practice and methods of other staff and clients. For example: the focus on reflection has impacted on the team in positive way, staff will often ask others for feedback and situations are discussed in groups to see if outcomes can be improved.

Reflection has been added to the team meeting agenda, staff supervision sessions and individual work with the client group. It is hoped this will extend to group session with the young people. Generally a more reflective approach has started to become incorporated across the service including into informal sessions and brief interventions.

As previously stated the NQSWs appear to feel more confident with their practice and will openly encourage and lead discussions. They are more aware of their own needs and career development. This is reflected in a focused professional approach and job satisfaction. Again this is leading staff by example.

As a team, staff members have become more professional in their approach since the start of the ASYE programme and consistency has improved. The hostel feels more settled and the client group sound more relaxed within it. Staff members appear to take more positive risks when discussing moving client's on; this appears to have a positive influence on the client group in general. Some clients use reflective skills when making decisions and are starting to look towards a future and aspire to new opportunities.

Chapter 1 will continue the SHIP SWEN partnership and hope to offer the ASYE to other NQSWs in the future.

What we learnt

Chapter 1 membership of the SHIP SWEN has enabled them to learn how other organisations managed difficult and challenging situations helped them prepare for the ASYE programme and think about how we would manage similar situations.

They recognised early on that it was imperative that senior managers were aware of the programme and supported them to ensure its success.

The HR workshop facilitated by the partnership particularly helped the ASYE co-ordinator have a better understanding of HR processes. This initiated discussions with upper management which may result in creating formal policies to support the programme.

While the study days that the NQSWs attend at Southampton County Council did impact on day to day team working, the benefits in terms of service efficiency outweighed any inconvenience incurred.

Overall Chapter 1 were happy with the way the ASYE programme has evolved within our project and we are looking forward to the opportunity to be involved with it again in the future.

Should they employ another NQSW, Chapter 1 feel we will be able to build on the current experience and provide the team with more support/ supervision to support any necessary changes. Chapter 1 would encourage private and voluntary organisations to provide the ASYE programme and grow from the experience.

“When I first moved into the hostel I wouldn't come out of my room - I was scared I would be bullied. The NQSW helped me settle into the accommodation by listening to my fears and help explore my anxieties”

Hostel resident

For more information please contact

www.chapter1.org.uk/kingsley-house--southampton

Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care has helped to develop the ASYE process and provides some practical resources and funding potential for employers involved in providing adult social care.

Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

Our special website section provides an overview of the process, lists how employers can register their NQSWs and includes related case study examples and guidance to demonstrate how other employers are delivering this process.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/asye

Culture Change Toolkit

Skills for Care has produced core principles, resources and guidance to support employers to develop the social work workforce.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/
Social-work/Social-work-CPD/
Continuing-to-develop-social-
workers.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Social-work/Social-work-CPD/Continuing-to-develop-social-workers.aspx)

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