Northern Ireland Social Care Council

The Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) for Newly Qualified Social Workers in NI

Revised Guidance for AYE Registrants, Employers and Supervising Social Workers.

October 2026

Produced by:

Northern Ireland Social Care Council
4th Floor
James House
Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 9536 2600

Web: www.niscc.info
Email: AYE@niscc.hscni.net

November 2015 (Version 3)
Updated March 2026

Contents

1. Introduction 5

1.1. Introduction to the AYE 5

1.2. Purpose of this Revised Guidance 6

2. Responsibilities for the Assessed Year in Employment 7

2.2 Responsibilities of Employers, Line Managers and Supervising Social Workers 9

2.3. Responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council 11

2.4. Responsibilities of the RQIA 11

2.5. Responsibilities of the HSC 12

3. Minimum Requirements for a Suitable Post for an AYE Registrant 13

3.1. Introduction 13

3.2. Policy 13

3.3. The Northern Ireland Social Care Minimum Requirements 13

4. Minimum Standards for Completion of the AYE 15

4.1. Introduction 15

4.2 Standards 15

4.3 Monitoring of the Standards 16

4.5 Audit of Assessed Year in Employment 16

5. AYE Performance Appraisal 20

5.1. Introduction 20

5.2. AYE Policy Requirements 20

5.3. Guidance on AYE Appraisal 20

5.4. Summary of Key Steps in Performance Appraisal 22

6. Completion, Extension and Non-Completion of the AYE 24

6.1. Completion of the AYE 24

6.2 Extension of the AYE 24

6.3 Non-Completion of the AYE due to Competency Issues 25

7. Revised Proformas 2014 26

7.1 Certificate of Completion of AYE (Form Ref AYE 1) 28

7.2. Application for an Extension to AYE (Form Ref AYE2) 30

7.3. Application for an Extension to AYE – Line Manager/Supervising SW Report Form (Form Ref AYE3) 32

7.4. Attachment to Reference – for Staff Changing Employer (or Team) within the AYE (Form Ref AYE4) 34

7.5. AYE Designated Signatory (Form Ref AYE5) 39

7.6. Undertaking AYE Practice outside Northern Ireland (Form Ref AYE6) 41

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Learning 43

Appendix 2 – DHSSPS Circular (OSS) AYE2/2015 48

Appendix 3 – Key Roles of Social Work National Occupational Standards/2012 55

Appendix 4 – Example of Personal Development Plan 55

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the AYE

1.1.1 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council was established in October 2001 to protect people who use social care services and to raise standards in social care training and practice. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council achieves this by promoting workforce development and by registering and regulating the social care workforce. This responsibility extends to ensuring that standards are met and that social workers at each stage in their career are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and values to enable them to meet the needs of service users.

1.1.2 The reform of social work education in 2004 incorporated the introduction of the Degree in Social Work (DSW). It also included all newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) undertaking an assessed year in employment (AYE), linked to registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. The AYE is designed to support the NQSW make the transition from being a social work student to a practising social worker and to develop and strengthen their professional confidence and competence.

1.1.3 Government policy (Circular HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) required that from 1 April 2006 all NQSWs must successfully complete the AYE in compliance with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Registration) Rules 2017: Part II 7[1]. The Circular has been revised and should be read alongside this guidance (Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015) (Appendix 2).

1.1.4 The policy aims to benefit:

1. The Public by ensuring that social work graduates are safe to practise and are competent, responsible practitioners.
2. Employers, line managers and supervising social workers by ensuring they are satisfied with the competence levels of newly qualified social workers in terms of fitness to practise.
3. The Registrant by ensuring NQSWs receive appropriate induction, professional supervision and support to enable them to demonstrate sustained effective competence in the workplace linked to continuing registration requirements.

1.1.5 Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom where an AYE is linked to registration. NQSWs are registered with a condition of successful completion of the AYE. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has a responsibility to monitor adherence to AYE standards, as included in Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015. It is recognised that confidence in practice and decision making grows with employment; the AYE gives the NQSW time for reflection and support to consolidate learning from the Degree in Social Work.

1.1.6 All NQSW who complete their AYE are then registered with a further condition to complete at least two requirements of the Consolidation Award of the Professional in Practice (PiP) Framework within the first three years of registration. This is part of career long continuous professional development (CPD).

[1] These Rules can be found on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council website: www.niscc.info

1.2 Purpose of this Revised Guidance

1.2.1 The AYE has been in operation since 2006. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council issued Guidance for Employers and AYE registrants in 2005 which was revised in 2010 and 2014. Annual monitoring by the Health and Social Care Board (HSC) and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council indicates that the AYE is broadly achieving its aim of improving support to NQSWs entering employment.

1.2.2 Current challenges for AYE registrants include a more mobile and transient workforce choosing to complete AYE across a number of short-term posts and through part-time options for employment. Other challenges include ensuring clarity, rigour and consistency of the AYE across all sectors and providing additional support to AYE's practicing social work during and after a pandemic.

1.2.3 This revised guidance has been completed during 2021, in partnership with the AYE Regional Leads Group comprising statutory and third sector social work membership who have responsibility for AYE support within their organisation. Feedback was also sought form AYE social workers. This guidance is intended to support clarity and promote consistency of approach.

1.2.4 The Social Care Council Website Learning Zone AYE Page includes all documentation and information about the AYE journey as well as useful learning materials and exemplars.

2. Responsibilities for the Assessed Year in Employment

Within the arrangements for the AYE there are responsibilities for the AYE registrant, the employer, line manager and supervising social worker, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, the Regulation Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), and the Health and Social Care Board (HSC).

2.1 Responsibilities of AYE Registrants

2.1.1 When social work students complete the Degree in Social Work, their registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is ended. NQSWs must:

- Apply to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council for registration on the part of the Register reserved for social workers. Registration as an AYE is with a condition that the AYE is completed successfully. AYEs must notify the Northern Ireland Social Care Council of any change of circumstances, including change of employer or contact details

- Obtain employment in an agency that can provide practice that will offer consolidation and development in the six key social work roles/National Occupational Standards for Social Work 2011 (Appendix 3) and support for the AYE

- Comply with and uphold the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers, 2015.

- Give the line manager/ supervising social worker a copy of the Summary of Learning (Appendix 1) so that the Personal Development Plan and learning in employment can link to learning as a student. The Summary of Learning should be completed during the final term of the Degree in Social Work. It is acknowledged that a minority of AYE's will not have completed a Summary of Learning at University and in these circumstances the AYE must self-complete this document as soon as they take up a social work post and share it with their line manager/supervising social worker.

- Keep employment details up-to-date for any change of employer within AYE. All AYE employment information should be kept up to date via the registrant's online account. When moving post the AYE registrant should check that their previous employer has completed the AYE 4 Attachment to Reference, including the number of days practice completed and progress made against the key roles. The AYE Registrant must make this available to the new line manager/supervising social worker in advance of commencing employment or first day of the new employment period.

- Make timely application for any request to be considered to extend AYE. The form AYE 2 must be completed as soon as the need for an extension is identified and must be agreed and signed by the line manager/ supervising social worker and forwarded to the Social Care Council in line with the agency process for consideration for approval.

- Take responsibility for maintaining and improving knowledge and skills and recording professional development activities. This includes the Social Care Council standard of completing at least ten training and development days. A record and analysis of learning from these days must be retained.

- Take personal responsibility for completing the AYE requirements and gathering evidence. This includes raising issues or concerns if you do not have access to the full range of practice and learning opportunities and frequency and quality of professional supervision as specified in this Guidance.

- Provide evidence to the employer to demonstrate development, consolidation and competence in each of the six key social work roles. This must include evidence of:

    1. An assessment of need, including a care/ support plan

    2. Risk assessment, including the assessment of harm or abuse and risk management/ safety plan

    3. The application and evaluation of at least two methods and/or models of social work intervention to promote change.

- Complete two reflective summaries (minimum of 750 words each) for the midpoint appraisal and the final appraisal point. These must demonstrate evidence of reflection, analysis and evaluation during the course of the AYE and must be linked to the six key roles. Anonymised case examples and service user/ carer feedback may be used to illustrate good practice where consent has been obtained.

- Be accountable for the quality of their work and meet relevant standards of practice

- Provide the information required by the Social Care Council if called for audit; more information is included at Section 4.4 Audit of Assessed Year in Employment

- Ensure the signed and endorsed Certificate of Completion of AYE (Form AYE 1) is returned to the Social Care Council in line with Employer process **or** apply for an extension, (form AYE 2); Refer to Section 6, Completion, Extension and Non- Completion of AYE

It is the registrant's responsibility to ensure the AYE 1 proforma is returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in line with the agency's agreed process; Failure to do so may lead to a delay in the process and a delay in re-registration.

Once the AYE is completed, further registration is with a condition that a minimum of two requirements in the Professional in Practice (PiP) Framework are obtained within the next three-year registration period.

2.1.2 What Registrants Should Expect from their Employer, Line Manager/ Supervising Social Worker During the AYE

- Allocation of work that will enable them to engage in the full range of professional social work activity expected of a practising social worker. Work allocation should allow for the consolidation and extension of the skills and knowledge gained on the Degree in Social Work
- A formal induction programme that meets the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Employers.
- A Personal Development Plan, informed by the Summary of Learning
- Information from the employer about the standards of practice they are expected to meet and how their performance will be appraised
- Opportunities to meet the Northern Ireland Social Care Council's standard of at least ten training and development days
- Access to professional supervision, support and appraisal from a professional social work supervisor, fortnightly for the first six months and monthly thereafter
- A midpoint appraisal of progress at no later than six months
- A final appraisal at no later than 11 months and if competent, a sign-off of the Certificate of Completion AYE 1

2.2 Responsibilities of Employers, Line Managers and Supervising Social Workers

2.2.1 The responsibilities of employers are set out in the DHSSPS Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015. Employers, line managers and supervising social workers have responsibility for ensuring the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Minimum Standards for completion of the AYE are met, (Section 4 Minimum Standards for Completion of the AYE). They should read and adhere to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Workers and Employers.

2.2.2 It is the line manager/ supervising social worker's responsibility to assess if the AYE registrant has successfully completed the AYE. The employer should, therefore, have systems in place to assess practice against the six key social work roles/National Occupational Standards for Social Work 2011. The six key social work roles are as follows:

1. Maintain professional accountability
2. Practice professional social work
3. Promote engagement and participation
4. Assess needs, risks and circumstances
5. Plan for person centred outcomes
6. Take actions to achieve change

The AYE can only commence when the necessary systems and range of supports and opportunities required are in place. It may not always be possible to offer access to the AYE in some posts.

Change of employer within the AYE

2.2.3 AYE registrants may change employer, within the timescale of the AYE. It is the responsibility of the employer, line manager/ supervising social worker to provide the registrant with a reference using form AYE 4. This must include sufficient information to assist the new employer to assess the development required for the new employee to successfully complete the AYE. This form should also be used when an AYE registrant changes post within an organisation. The AYE registrant should ensure they have an AYE 4 to make available to their new line manager/ supervising social worker when transferring or moving post within the AYE. New Employers should read the AYE 4 prior to employment of an AYE registrant.

2.2.4 The AYE policy applies to all NQSWs who have been employed as a social worker for less than a calendar year, regardless of where they graduated or have been employed. Employers must take account of the AYE registrant's experience to date along with the development needs of all new employees required to undertake the AYE.

Newly Qualified Social Workers Who Practise Outside of Northern Ireland

2.2.6 If a NQSW is employed in a social work post outside Northern Ireland for a calendar year and that employer confirms competence in practice they do not have to undertake the AYE if they return to work in Northern Ireland. The employer must complete Undertaking AYE Practice Outside Northern Ireland (Form AYE 6) and the registrant must return this to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council to seek registration without the AYE condition.

If a NQSW has been employed for less than a year and plans to work in Northern Ireland they should ask their employer to complete the Attachment to Reference form (Form AYE 4) and then share this with their new employer. When they commence a post that is suitable to undertake the AYE the employer will assess competence to date and may confirm part completion of the year. This is at the employer's discretion.

Confirmation of competence

2.2.7 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Certificate of Completion of AYE (Form AYE 1) must be used to confirm successful completion of the AYE. The employer confirms that the Northern Ireland Social Care Council AYE Standards have been met.

This form must be signed by the following:

- The line manager
- A registered social worker where the line manager is not a registered social worker
- The registrant
- The Designated Signatory of the AYE registrant's current employer

The Signatory must be a senior manager who understands the standards an AYE registrant is expected to meet, is registered with the Social Care Council as a Designated Signatory (Form AYE 5) and can satisfy him / herself that the standards have been met.

Once the AYE is completed, registration is with condition that a minimum of two requirements in the Professional in Practice Framework are obtained within the next three years.

2.2.8 It is the AYE registrant's responsibility to ensure the form is returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council in line with agreed agency process.

2.3 Responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council

2.3.1 The role of the Social Care Council is to ensure that all those admitted to Part One of the Social Care Register are fit and competent to be on the Register, and that they meet the requirements to maintain registration. NQSWs are placed on the social work part of the Register with a condition of successful completion of the AYE. **This condition is effective for a calendar year (minimum) of 198 days in direct practice and allows for an extension under specified circumstances. See Section 6 Completion, Extension and Non-Completion of the AYE.**

2.3.2 The purpose of the AYE is to ensure that NQSWs have made the transition from student to employee and have demonstrated sustained, continuous, effective competence in the workplace. The Social Care Council needs to be satisfied that at the end of the year, or an extended period of AYE, the registrant is safe to practise and is a competent and responsible practitioner.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will not remove the AYE condition from a registrant who is subject to a fitness to practise investigation until the fitness to practise issue has been resolved and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council is satisfied that the AYE condition has been met.

2.3.3 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council undertakes annual monitoring of AYE arrangements and numbers of AYE registrants in the statutory, voluntary, independent, education and justice sectors. This ensures compliance with the Social Care Council standards; findings are used to highlight key themes, inform workforce planning and recommend improvements in the arrangements and promote regional consistency.

2.3.4 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council undertakes an annual audit of a sample of AYE registrants in order to satisfy itself that the quality of AYE registrant processes and assessment is rigorous and consistent across all sectors, in accordance with the DHSSPS Circular 2015. See Section 4.4 Audit of AYE.

2.4 Responsibilities of the RQIA

2.4.1 The RQIA will, as appropriate, monitor compliance of the employer responsibilities for implementing the AYE Standards, through inspection and service regulation.

2.5 Responsibilities of the HSC

2.5.1 Annual monitoring of AYE arrangements is conducted by the HSC based on the HSC Trust annual reports to ensure compliance with the DHSSPS Circular and standards; to recommend improvements in arrangements and to promote regional consistency across HSC Trusts.

3. Minimum Requirements for a Suitable Post for an AYE Registrant

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 NQSWs have a range of employment options when applying for a social work post and it is becoming more common to complete AYE across several posts and Trusts or sectors. There is also an increase in part-time and temporary employment including through Bank and agency work by choice. NQSWs are also applying for posts in integrated teams which are open to a range of professionals as well as social workers.

3.2 Policy

3.2.1 One of the aims of the AYE is to support AYE registrants in the workplace to further develop the knowledge and skills gained on the Degree in Social Work. At the end of the year they should have demonstrated that they are safe, competent and effective in social work practice.

3.2.2 Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015 stipulates the following requirements for AYE registrants in their assessed year:

- All appointments must be to posts which require a social work qualification and which meet the requirements for a suitable post as specified in the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Guidance.
- Professional supervision must be available from a qualified social worker and in line with agreed Departmental Policy
- Allocation of work will need to allow newly qualified social workers to engage in the full range of professional social work activity expected of a practising social worker. Allocation of work should allow for the consolidation and extension of the professional skills and knowledge gained on the Degree in Social Work

3.3 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Minimum Requirements

3.3.1 (1) The qualification requirements for the post must include a social work qualification. As a minimum requirement this must be stipulated in the desirable criteria for the post

(2) There must be professional supervision by a qualified social worker, at least fortnightly for the first six months and thereafter at least monthly

(3) There must be scope within the post for an AYE registrant to practise the six key social work roles and to consolidate and extend the professional skills and knowledge gained on the Degree in Social Work

(4) The post must be sufficiently challenging so that the AYE registrant can demonstrate by the end of the year that they are able to practise safely, competently and responsibly as a social worker

(5) It is the employer's responsibility to audit any post they believe may be suitable for an AYE registrant to undertake the AYE and ensure it meets points1-4 above

3.3.2 If a post meets criteria one and two but the duties are narrowly defined the Social Care Council expect an employer to consider whether additional practice opportunities can be offered so that requirements three and four can be met.

For example:
An organisation that provides support to people experiencing mental ill health advertises the post of Project Worker. The job specification includes a range of qualifications from QCF 3 to a professional qualification in social work or nursing. The duties of the post are, broadly, to assist the service user and provide practical support.

This post would only be suitable for an AYE registrant if the duties can be extended to include practice in the six key social work roles and allow for increasing responsibility and independence as a social worker.

3.3.3 Temporary staff, bank staff, agency staff

An increasing number of AYE registrants are undertaking short term contracts including agency and bank work. In order to demonstrate consolidation and extension of their professional skills and knowledge, the AYE registrant must engage in sustained direct work with service users. This should be assessed by the employer as to whether the quality of the work experience is sufficient to contribute to the AYE. Bank work may be considered as suitable employment only when the Registrant can demonstrate sustained practice in a bank post and where there is professional supervision in accordance with required timeframes and standards.

Use of Bank, temporary and agency posts which result in a number of moves within the AYE year may make it more difficult for a registrant to demonstrate sustained practice and developmental progress and requires appropriate use of the AYE 4 Attachment to Reference Form to document progress and gaps in experience.

At the end of each period of employment the supervising social worker must complete Attachment to Reference for Staff Changing Employment (Form AYE 4). The AYE registrant must give this to their next employer. This will enable the new employer to work with the AYE registrant to identify development needs and to enable them to build on practice experience. Temporary and agency staff will need to apply for an extension to the AYE if their first year in employment includes short placements or periods of unemployment. They must meet the requirement of a calendar year (198 days) of assessed practice.

3.3.4 If an employer is uncertain about the suitability of a post, having considered the minimum requirements stated above, they should seek advice from the Social Care Council.

4. Minimum standards for Completion of the AYE

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 AYE registrants work in a range of social work settings and to ensure there is clarity, rigour and consistency in their experience the Northern Ireland Social Care Council has set minimum standards for the AYE.

4.1.2 These Standards apply to the AYE registrant regardless of where and in which sector, the AYE registrant is working. There is further information on the operation of the Standards in Section 5 – AYE Performance Appraisal.

4.2 Standards

Standard 1
The AYE registrant must have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which builds on the Summary of Learning completed towards the end of the Degree in Social Work. Opportunities should be made available to meet development needs. A sample Summary of Learning form is attached (Appendix 1).

Standard 2
The AYE registrant must undertake induction to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Employers. There should also be induction to the AYE, including information on the employer's systems for support and assessment.

Standard 3
The AYE registrant must have a supervision plan or contract and must have professional supervision at least every two weeks during the first six months and thereafter at least monthly if satisfactory progress is confirmed at the midpoint appraisal (see Standard 5 on midpoint appraisal). Supervision must be recorded and should be undertaken in formal, planned, one-to-one sessions conducted by a registered social worker with appropriate experience. One-to- one supervision may be supported by mentoring, peer support and group supervision. Supervision records and service user information must not be contained in the AYE portfolio.

Standard 4
The AYE Registrant must undertake at least ten training and development days as part of the condition of their registration. Training and development days are time spent on induction, training or other work-related development activities such as reading, research, listening to podcasts, attending on-line webinars and AYE support and development groups. The Social Care Council has a wide range of useful resources on our Learning Zone Learning https://learningzone.niscc.info/

The activities should relate to the PDP. The 10 training and development days can be broken down into the equivalent hours (75 hours) and applied as appropriate to the development activity.

These days must be recorded and an analysis of learning attached.

3. The frequencies stipulated in this standard assume staff are in full-time employment. There may need to be adjustment where staff are employed part-time.

Standard 5

There must be a midpoint appraisal at no later than six months. A reflective summary which includes reflection, analysis and evaluation on the progress of practice in the six key social work roles (minimum of 750 words) must be submitted to the supervisor by the AYE registrant in advance of the appraisal. Feedback must be given by the supervisor. There should be agreement at this stage as to whether the frequency of supervision should be reduced, taking account of the confidence and competence of the AYE registrant and the complexity of the workload.

Standard 6

There must be a final appraisal for the AYE year at no later than eleven months. A further reflective summary of overall reflection, analysis and evaluation of the six key social work roles must be submitted to the supervisor by the AYE registrant (minimum of 750 words) in advance of the appraisal. Feedback must be given by the supervisor. At this stage a decision should be reached on whether the AYE registrant is fit to practise as a safe, competent and effective social worker. If the employer believes the registrant requires further experience to ratify this decision an extension should be requested from the Social Care Council (Form AYE 2). As increasing numbers of registrants are undertaking a range of short-term contracts, requests for extensions have increased. An employer may require the AYE registrant to work for an additional period of time to ensure that a robust decision regarding competence can be confirmed. In circumstances where an extension is required for reasons related to competency this should be discussed and agreed with the registrant and an AYE 3 must be completed and submitted with the AYE 2.

4.3 Monitoring of the Standards

4.3.1 Employers will be asked to assure the Northern Ireland Social Care Council that these Standards have been met when they sign off the Certificate of Completion.

4.3.2 HSC Trusts should include information on their monitoring of the Standards in their annual AYE review report to the HSCB.

4.3.3 The Social Care Council will monitor adherence to the Standards in the statutory, justice, education, voluntary and independent sectors.

4.3.4 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will annually undertake an audit of AYE registrants across all employers to ensure Standards are rigorous and consistent across all sectors.

4.4 Audit of Assessed Year in Employment

4.4.1 Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015 – Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW): Implementation of the AYE Policy from 9 November 2015. The circular states:

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will wish to satisfy itself of the quality of NQSW evidence used by employers to assess successful completion of the AYE and to verify the suitability of the AYE for registration status……this will be carried out by audit of a sample of AYE submissions

The Social Care Council undertakes an annual audit to ensure the AYE registrants' process and assessment during the AYE is rigorous and consistent **across all sectors.** The AYE registrant will, if selected for audit, submit information as listed below at 4.4.4. Key themes emerging from the audit in regards to strengths and areas for improvement will be circulated to employers supporting AYE registrants. This will not detract from the employer's responsibility to assess whether the AYE registrant has successfully completed the AYE.

An annual monitoring of AYE arrangements is conducted by the Health and Social Care Board to ensure compliance with the above Circular and associated standards, this is used to recommend improvements and to promote regional consistency.

A further annual monitoring process is undertaken by the Social Care Council with an annual monitoring review of data for NQSW registering for AYE in across all sectors.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council audit will complement existing annual monitoring and work towards ensuring rigour and consistency across all sectors.

4.4.2 The Audit Process

The Social Care Council undertake an annual audit of the Assessed Year in Employment. The audit assesses the selected AYE registrants' submissions against The Social Care Council Standards for the AYE.

4.4.3 How the Social Care Council will select for audit

In April each year the Social Care Council will select a sample of AYE registrants for audit who are coming to the end of their AYE. They will be selected from all employment sectors.

4.4.4 AYE submission for audit

AYE registrants who have been selected for audit will be informed 3 months in advance of the submission date.

AYE registrants selected for audit will receive notification from the Northern Ireland Social Care Council and be invited to complete the AYE Audit form and be given instructions on how to submit their information.

The audit submission must include the following:

1. Summary of work role (maximum 250 words). This should describe the AYE registrants current work role. If the AYE registrant has held more than one post they should briefly outline the roles they have held.
2. A copy of the Personal Development Plan (PDP). This should have been completed during the first month of the AYE and have been updated, as required. It should identify learning and development needs and a plan to meet these. It should be signed by the registrant and their line manager/ supervising social worker.
3. A summary of the training and development days, with brief analysis of learning that have been undertaken during the AYE. A minimum of ten training and development days must have been completed during the AYE.
4. A copy of the two reflective summaries that were submitted to the supervising social worker at the mid and final appraisal points. These must be a minimum of 750 words each.
5. Through self-audit confirm that during the AYE the AYE registrant has:
    (i) Provided the employer with a Summary of Learning
    (ii) Completed an induction to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards
    (iii) Provided the employer/s with evidence that enabled them to assess whether the AYE registrant met each of the six social work key roles

4.4.5 Deferral Due to Exceptional Circumstances

As NQSWs are placed on the social work part of the register with a condition of completion of the AYE, it is essential that all AYE registrants ensure they are meeting the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards for Completion of the AYE. If there are exceptional circumstances which are beyond the AYE Registrants control that prevent them from submitting the requirements for audit, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council can consider requests for deferral in accordance with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Rules of March 2011:

Rule 8 (6) The Council shall not refer a registrant to the Registration Committee in accordance with rule 8 (5) where that registrant has failed to complete the post registration training and learning requirements due to exceptional circumstances or where the registrant is on maternity, adoption or fostering leave.

If the AYE registrant is unable to submit the AYE audit due to exceptional circumstances they must inform the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Registration team, in writing, at least twenty days before the date required.

4.4.6 Assessment of Audit

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council assessors will assess the audit submissions against the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Minimum Standards for Completion of the AYE. The assessors are social workers who have detailed knowledge of the AYE. The audit submissions will be given a reference number and the identity of the registrant will not be disclosed to the assessor. If all the work required has not been submitted, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council may request further information to be submitted within twenty days.

4.4.7 Outcome of Audit

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will confirm with the AYE registrant that they have received and reviewed the submission. The employer will only be contacted if the assessor identifies issues of risk or governance that need to be raised with them. The AYE registrant will be informed if this is to happen.

Key themes and learning from all the submissions for this audit point will be available on the AYE section of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council portal and circulated to employers of AYE registrants. AYE individuals will not be identifiable. This will contribute to continued improvement and development of the AYE across all sectors.

5. AYE Performance Appraisal

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Reviews of the AYE have indicated that there are a range of methods being used to assess the competence of newly qualified social workers during the AYE.

5.1.2 This Social Care Council guidance sets out what is required to determine that an AYE registrant is competent.

5.2 AYE Policy Requirements

5.2.1 The Departmental Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015 (Appendix 2) states:

- Employers must be satisfied that new social work graduate entrants are performing at a level that allows for confirmation that they are able to practise as safe, competent and responsible social workers and therefore suitable for continued registration and employment as social workers.

- Final Performance Appraisal for AYE purposes must take place at the 11 month point and the outcomes recorded on the relevant Northern Ireland Social Care Council proforma to facilitate the registration process. Where the line manager conducting the performance, appraisal is not a qualified social worker, the final performance appraisal must be signed off by the AYE practice supervisor in agreement with the line manager and the Designated Signatory from the organisation. The Designated Signatory may request additional information or query whether the required standards have been met before signing off the AYE 1.

5.3 Guidance on AYE Appraisal

5.3.1 The AYE registrant has demonstrated sufficient competence on the Degree in Social Work to attain a social work qualification. The assessment methods used during the AYE should be proportionate and reflect good supervision practice of an AYE registrant. In most instances, observations of practice will not be required unless this is normal practice for supervision by that employer or is naturally occurring such as when an AYE registrant and manager are both present at a review.

5.3.2 Employers may wish to develop a framework and their own documentation for assessing competence. It must contain information on the six key social work roles on which the AYE registrant will be appraised.

5.3.3 AYE registrants must bring a Summary of Learning to the employer. Where the Summary of Learning is not competed at a university, or is out of date due to delay in commencing AYE, the registrant should self-complete using the Summary of Learning pro-forma (Appendix 1); this should be the starting point for a Personal Development Plan (PDP) for the AYE period.

5.3.4 AYE registrants must record training and development days and reflect on learning from these.

5.3.5 AYE registrants must provide evidence for the supervising social worker of how they are consolidating and extending skills and knowledge gained on the Degree in Social Work. This should reflect the six key social work roles. The evidence must include: an assessment of need including a care/ support plan, a risk assessment including the risk of harm or abuse and a risk management/ safety plan. Registrants must also demonstrate the application and evaluation of at least two methods and/or models of social work intervention to promote change. The emphasis should be on naturally occurring evidence generated as a result of the AYE registrants' day-to day practice.

5.3.6 Supervising social workers must record, on a regular basis, how the AYE registrant is performing in relation to the six key social work roles. Employers may develop a proforma for this purpose or the supervising social worker may include comment within the supervision records. It is the responsibility of the AYE registrant to demonstrate their competence in daily practice, through agency records, discussion in supervision and in the reflective summaries that they submit to the supervising social worker at the mid and final appraisal points.

5.3.7 The mid-point appraisal is a crucial time for identifying progress and development issues. The PDP should be reviewed and updated and plans made to address any gaps in practice experience and/or training needs. The AYE registrant must submit a reflective summary of their progress in relation to the six key social work roles and an outline of future development needs to the supervisor in advance of the appraisal (minimum of 750 words). There must also be discussion at this stage about whether the frequency of supervision should be reduced, taking account of the confidence and competence of the AYE registrant and the complexity of the workload.

5.3.8 At the final appraisal stage the AYE registrant must submit a final reflective summary linked to the six key social work roles and identification of future learning (minimum 750 words) to the supervisor. The AYE is just one part of the social work journey of continuous professional development (CPD) and following successful completion of the AYE social workers will have a further condition placed on their registration requiring them to complete a minimum of two requirements in the Consolidation Award, Professional in Practice (PiP) by the time of their first three-year renewal. The final appraisal should be used as an opportunity to discuss PiP, the CPD professional development framework for social workers and review options of how the AYE registrant can work toward attainment of the mandatory two requirements in their next three years of registration.

5.4 Summary of Key Steps in Performance Appraisal

5.4.1 The following procedures are the **minimum** for each AYE registrant:

Task	Timescale
1. AYE registrant to bring a Summary of Learning from the Degree in Social Work or a self-completed Summary of Learning.	To the first supervision session
2. A Personal Development Plan (PDP) to be developed by the AYE registrant and the supervising social worker.	By end of the first month
3. An induction undertaken to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Standards of Conduct and Practice for Employers. *Where staff are already in post prior to commencing AYE any gaps in induction should be addressed.	By the end of the sixth month
4. On-going supervision, recording progress over the six social work key roles. A record must also be kept of the AYE's training and development days. There should be discussion about the frequency of supervision.	Supervision fortnightly for the first six months and at least monthly for the remainder of the AYE
5. **Evidence**. The AYE registrant must compile evidence which demonstrates consolidation and development in each of the six key social work roles. **This must include**: a) An assessment of need including a care/support plan work plan b) A risk assessment including the assessment of harm or abuse and a risk management/ safety plan c) The application and evaluation of at least two methods and/or models of social work intervention to promote change. d) A record and analysis of all training and development days.	Evidence should be reviewed regularly in supervision. Further work required should be identified. Decisions should be reached and recorded as to whether the AYE registrant is competent in each of the six key social work roles

6. **Midpoint appraisal**. There must be an assessment of the following: • The AYE registrant's reflection on their practice in relation to the six key social work roles. Prior to the meeting, the registrant must submit a reflective summary of progress in relation to the six key social work roles and an outline of future development during the next six months (minimum of 750 words). Feedback must be provided by the supervisor. The outcomes of the discussion should be recorded in the supervision record. • The PDP should be reviewed and updated. This must include any identified gaps and areas for development, future learning and information on training and development days.	At approximately six months
7. **Final appraisal**. Prior to this appraisal the AYE registrant must submit a further reflective summary which reviews overall progress and achievement in meeting the six key social work roles and identifies future learning needs (minimum of 750 works) to the supervisor. There should be discussion related to Professional in Practice and the options available to the AYE registrant to work towards attainment of the mandatory two requirements in the Consolidation Award. At this final appraisal the AYE registrant will be either confirmed as having met the Northern Ireland Social Care Council requirements for completion of the AYE or that an extension is required. If the AYE is successfully completed, Form AYE1 must be signed by the supervising social worker and by the Designated Signatory and returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council by the AYE registrant at least ten working days before the end of the AYE condition. AYE registrants must complete their final month of AYE whilst awaiting processing of their AYE 1 with the Social Care Council.	No later than 11 months

6. Completion, Extension and Non-Completion of the AYE

6.1 Completion of the AYE

6.1.1 When the AYE registrant returns Form AYE1 the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will remove the AYE condition and will renew registration for a further three years. **Renewal of registration is with a further condition that a minimum of two requirements of the Consolidation Award, Professional in Practice are achieved by the next renewal date**. If the AYE registrant fails to provide notification of the satisfactory completion of the AYE or a request for an extension, by the due date, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will contact the employer and may remove the registrant's entry from the social work part of the Register.

6.2 Extension of the AYE

6.2.1. The Northern Ireland Social Care Council will consider an application from an AYE registrant for an extension to the AYE where:

1. The number of working days specified in the DHSSPS Circular have not been met for justifiable reasons including part-time working; or

2. Due to a number of short-term contracts the employer requires additional time to ensure a robust decision on competence can be reached; or

3. There are personal or health reasons, including maternity, adoption or fostering leave for an extension; or

4. The AYE registrant is the subject of a conduct investigation (see paragraph 2.3.2)

   Any application for an extension under these circumstances should be accompanied by an employer endorsement Application for an Extension to AYE (Form AYE 2)

6.2.2 Where an AYE registrant has been unable to demonstrate the required standards of AYE due to level of competence, an extension may be requested. This must be accompanied by an employer endorsement and a report from the line manager/ supervising social worker, outlining the gaps in competence and a time bound plan to achieve the necessary competence. Application for an Extension to the AYE (Forms AYE2 & AYE3) must be submitted to the Social Care Council for consideration. The employer or line manager/ supervising social worker can, if needed, request further evidence from the AYE registrant.

More than one extension is acceptable, if it is believed an additional period of work experience would enable the AYE registrant to make progress. When a decision is reached that the AYE registrant has not completed the AYE, non-completion procedures should be followed.

6.3 Non-Completion of the AYE Due to Competency Issues

6.3.1 Where an AYE registrant has not completed the AYE because of competency issues, the employer must submit a report to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. The report must include:

1. The supports that were offered to the AYE registrant
2. Extensions approved, if any
3. A list of the training and development days, along with analysis, completed
4. A list of the evidence provided by the AYE registrant along with progress and decisions reached regarding competence for each of the six key social work roles
5. The two reflective summaries completed by the registrant at the six and eleven-month appraisal points (if completed)
6. Any additional reports the line manager/ supervising social worker or registrant may believe will be helpful such as an inappropriate conduct report or concerns regarding practice

The report must be signed by the employer, supervising social worker/ line manager and the registrant.

6.3.2 Following receipt of the report, the registrant may be referred to the Registration Committee for a decision on future action.

6.3.3 If the registrant wishes to repeat the AYE, possibly with a different employer, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (Registration) Rules 11 and 12 will apply. This will enable the registrant to apply for restoration to the register.

7.0 Revised Proformas 2014

Please note that all proformas are available at www.niscc.info or the **Learning Zone.**

The Certificate of Completion must be completed and forwarded to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council via email to registration@niscc.hscni.net.

The other proformas should be completed and printed/emailed for signatures. If a copy is required by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, for example the Attachment to Reference Form this will need to be returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council to registration@niscc.hscni.net.

Certificate of Completion of AYE
(Form reference AYE1)
Use this form when the AYE has been successfully completed.

Application for an Extension to the AYE
(Form reference AYE2)
This form must be completed and returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council as soon as it is apparent that an extension will be required.

Application for Extension to the AYE – Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker Report Form
(Form reference AYE3)
This form must accompany 'Application for Extension' form AYE2 when 'other reasons' are stated for requesting an extension to the AYE.

Attachment to Reference – for Staff Changing Employer (or Team) Within the AYE
(Form reference AYE4)
This form must be used if supplying a reference for an AYE registrant when they are transferring employment during the period of their Assessed Year in Employment. This form may also be used when an AYE registrant remains with the same employer but is changing teams.

AYE Designated Signatory
(Form reference AYE 5)
This form must be completed by employers to notify the Northern Ireland Social Care Council of their nominees to sign-off AYE Certificates of Completion and Applications for Extensions. The Designated Signatory must be a senior manager of the organisation, should understand the standards a newly qualified social worker is expected to meet and be in a position to satisfy him/herself that these standards have been met.

Undertaking AYE Practice outside Northern Ireland
Form reference AYE 6

This form must be completed by the registrant and signed by the employer if social work experience has been undertaken in a social work post outside Northern Ireland during the AYE year. This must have been experience gained in a post that required a social work qualification and where the applicant had regular supervision from a qualified social worker. This form should be forwarded to the Social Care Council when seeking to register as a social worker without AYE condition in Northern Ireland to demonstrate a full year of post qualifying social work experience.

Appendix 1: Summary of Learning
The purpose of this form is to provide continuity in learning and career development for newly qualified social workers embarking on the Assessed Year in Employment. The form should be completed with a social work tutor and shared with a new employer to inform the Professional Development Plan. Where social workers do not have a Learning Plan from a university or have had a gap in commencing AYE they should self-complete a Summary of Learning using the proforma.

Appendix 2: DHSSPS Circular (OSS) AYE2/2015

Appendix 3: Key Roles for Social Work National Occupational Standards/2011

Appendix 4: Example of Personal Development Plan

Certificate of Completion of AYE

(Form Ref AYE1)

It is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure this form is completed and returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council within one year of commencing the AYE. Failure to do so may result in removal from the Register. Registrants who require additional time to complete the AYE should apply for an extension using the Northern Ireland Social Care Council 'Application for Extension' (Form reference AYE2).

Registrant name as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register:

.....

Registration number: _____

Employing organisation: _____

.....

.....

Employment sector: _____

Workplace address: _____

.....

.....

_____ **Postcode:** _____

Contact details: Phone: _____

Email: _____

Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker name as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register (please underline applicable designation)**:**

.....

Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker Registration number:

.....

Date Registrant commenced the AYE: _____

Date Registrant will complete the AYE: _____

(This will be one calendar year from the date of commencement unless an extension was agreed)

Employer Declaration

The registrant has successfully completed the AYE and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council AYE Standards have been met.

Registrant Details

Name (Please Print)**:**……..

Registrant signature:…… **Date:**……

Line Manager Details

Name (Please Print)**:**……

Line Manager signature: …… **Date:**……

Supervising Social Worker signature (if not Line Manager):

Name (Please Print)**:**……

Signature:…… **Date:**……

Tel No:……**Email:**……

Employer Designated Signatory[1]

Name (Please Print)**:**……

Position in the Organisation:……

Signature:……

Tel No:……**Email:**…… **Date:**……

[1]This form should be signed by a senior manager who has been designated by their organisation. Organisations employing newly qualified social workers must nominate a designated person/s to confirm completion of the AYE and must provide the Northern Ireland Social Care Council with sample signatures (see Proforma AYE 5). The designated person should understand the standards a newly qualified social worker is expected to meet and be in a position to satisfy him/herself that these standards have been met.

Application for an Extension to the AYE

(Form Ref AYE2)

This form should be completed and returned to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council as soon as it is apparent that an extension will be required.

Registrant name as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register:

.....

Registration number: _____

Employing organisation: _____

.....

.....

Workplace address: _____

.....

_____ **Postcode:** _____

Contact details Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Line Manager / Supervising Social Worker name as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register:
(Please underline applicable designation)

.....

Line Manager / Supervising Social Worker Registration number:

.....

Date Registrant commenced the AYE: _____
(i.e. the date of registration or the date commenced employment, if later)

Expected date of completion of the AYE (i.e. end date of extension):

.....

Have you applied for a previous extension? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

If yes, state the expected date of completion of previous extension?

.....

Reason for application of extension[6] (Tick as appropriate)

☐ **6. Employment arrangements justify an extension e.g. part-time working, temporary contracts, etc.**

Please provide details:_____

.....

.....

☐ **7. Personal or health reasons**

Please provide details:_____

.....

.....

☐ **(iii) Competence/capability issues**

A Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker Report must accompany this form. Use form reference AYE3

Registrant signature:_____ **Date:**_

Line manager/supervising social worker:

Name (Please Print)**:**_____

Signature:_____ **Date:**_

Employer signatory

Name (Please Print)**:**_____

Position in the Organisation:_____

Signature:_____ **Date:**_

[6]Refer to AYE Guidance for further information on justifiable reasons

Application for Extension to the AYE – Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker Report Form

(Form Ref AYE3)

This form should accompany 'Application for Extension' form AYE2 when 'reasons of competence' are stated for requesting an extension to the AYE.

AYE Line Manager Report and Action Plan		
Detail Standard(s) Which Have Not Yet Been Achieved	**Plan to Achieve Required Standard**	**Timescale**
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……

Detail Standard(s) Which Have Not Yet Been Achieved	Plan to Achieve Required Standard	Timescale
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……
……	……	……

Registrant signature: …… Date: ……
Line manager/supervising social worker name: (Please Print)**: ……**
Line manager/supervising social worker signature: …… Date: ……

Attachment to Reference –
for Staff Changing Employer or Team Within the AYE
(Form Ref AYE4)

This form should be used if you are supplying a reference for an employee when they are transferring employment during the period of their Assessed Year in Employment. The form should be signed by the employer/ supervising social worker and the registrant.

This form can also be completed if you have worked for under a year as a social worker outside the Northern Ireland and want the experience to be considered by an employer to contribute to the AYE.

Registrant name as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register:

.....

Registration number: _____

Employing organisation: _____

Date Registrant commenced employment with this employer:

.....

Date employment ended: _____

Please state the number of days of direct practice completed (a day is 7.5 hours). Do not include training/development time, or time absent from work because of leave or sickness).

.....

Please confirm that supervision was provided in accordance with the AYE Rules. If not please provide further details:

.....

.....

Please outline the practice undertaken by the registrant during this period of employment:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Please summarise the registrant's progress during this period of employment:

Key Roles	Progress	Evidence	Signed off as competent Yes/No	Gaps in experience
1. Maintain professional accountability				
2. Practice professional social work				
3. Promote engagement and participation				

4. Assess needs, risks and circumstances				
5. Plan for person centred outcomes				
6. Take actions to achieve change				

Training/development days/activities completed since appointment with this employer:

Please list the Title and Date that the training was undertaken within this period of employment. Briefly outline the content of the training.

Title	Date	Content

Training/development needs identified:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Supervising social worker name (Please print):_____

Supervising social worker signature:_____

Designation:_____

Tel No_____**Email**:_____

Registrant Name (Please print):_____

Registrant signature:_____

Tel No:_____**Email**:_____

Previous AYE Posts Held:

Employer	Dates of Employment	AYE 4 Completed

AYE Designated Signatory

(Form Ref AYE5)

This form is to be completed if you have been nominated by your employer to become a Designated Signatory to sign-off the Northern Ireland Social Care Council AYE Certificates of Completion and Applications for an Extension. A designated signatory must be a senior manager of the organisation, should understand the standards a newly qualified social worker is expected to meet and be in a position to satisfy him/herself that these standards have been met.

Section 1 – Personal Details

Title (Mr, Mrs, Miss, etc)	Forename(s)	Surname
Job Title		Registration No.
Telephone No.	Email	

Section 2 – Organisation Details

Your Work Address	**Head Office Address** (if different)
Name of Organisation	Name of Organisation
Address 1	Address 1
Address 2	Address 2
Town/City	Town/City
Postcode	Postcode
Country	Country

Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Designated Signatory Declaration

Please complete this section if you have been nominated by your employer to sign-off AYE Certificates of Completion and Applications for an Extension.

I confirm that my employing organisation has nominated me to sign-off AYE Certificates of Completion and Applications for an Extension.	
Signature:	**Date:**

Head of Organisation Section

This section must be completed by a Director of Social Work or equivalent.

I declare that I have nominated the above person as a Designated Signatory to sign-off AYE Certificates of Completion and Applications for an Extension.	
Print Name	
Position	
Signature:	**Date:**

Please be aware that you are required to inform the Council of any changes to the details you have provided on this form.

Undertaking AYE Practice outside Northern Ireland

(Form Ref AYE6)

This form is to be completed by NQSWs who are registered on the Social Work Part of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register with 'Condition of the Assessed Year in Employment' (AYE) and have completed a year in Social Work Practice outside Northern Ireland. This form should be returned to registration@niscc.hscni.net when seeking registration without AYE condition.

Registrant's name (as appears on Northern Ireland Social Care Council Register):

.....

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Registration number: _____
Social Work Registration number in the country of practice……
Comment……..
……
……

Please provide details of Social Work employment you have undertaken since Qualifying:

Name of Organisation	Employment Address	Start Date	End Date

From:_____ To:_____

Registrant Signature:_____

Date:_____

Line Manager Details

Name of Line Manager:

.....

Job Title:

.....

Organisation Name and Employment Address:

.....

I confirm that during this period of employment the above-named person was employed as a social worker and received regular supervision from a qualified social worker ☐

Tel No:_____ **Email address:**_____

Line Manager Signature:_____

Date:_____

Appendix 1

Summary of learning

Assessed Year in Employment (AYE)

Form

JANUARY 2026

Summary of Learning

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide continuity in learning and career development for newly qualified social workers embarking on the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE).

The form should be completed by the student at the end of the PLO using the final Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO) Practice Teacher's Report. Once an AYE post has been obtained it should then be shared by the newly qualified social worker (NQSW) with their line manager and used to inform a Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Complete all sections:

Registrant name*: (*as appears on the Northern Ireland Social Care Council Public Facing Register)	
Registration number:	
Date Degree in Social Work completed/ to be completed:	
University/College:	
Undergraduate Route/Relevant Graduate Route (please delete as appropriate)	

Practice Learning Opportunities

Final PLO Setting:	
Practice Area:	
Name of Practice Teacher:	

Previous Practice Placements
(Note: please list all previous PLO's, Practice Teachers and provide the overall outcome of the PLO)

Previous PLO location and practice learning setting	**Dates**	**Practice Teacher name**	**Overall outcome* (pass, fail or incomplete placement)** *Note: If the PLO outcome was 'fail' or 'incomplete' please attach a copy of the final report to this document

Educational achievements

Further and/or Higher Education (Note: for example, other degrees/qualifications)	

Previous Work Experience

Paid and/or voluntary experience (Note: please list any paid or voluntary experience of social work/social care with dates prior to starting or during the Degree in Social Work)	

The student should complete this section by transferring the relevant sections of the final Practice Teacher's Report:

Final Practice Learning Opportunity (PLO)

Assessment of student's professional development through PLO and summary of future learning needs.

Key Roles	Summary of the student's professional development through their final PLO
1. Maintain Professional Accountability	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	
2. Practice Professional Social Work	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	
3. Promote Engagement and Participation	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	
4. Assess Needs, Risks and Circumstances	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	
5. Plan for Person Centred Outcomes	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	

6. Take Actions to Achieve Change	
Summary of areas for further development within this key role	

Practice Teacher:	
Date of PLO:	

Tutor Commentary

This section should be completed and signed off by the student's Tutor. (In this section the Tutor can identify positive practice, achievements in university and / or areas for development that have not been already identified within this report.)

Tutor's Name:	
Tutor's Signature:	
Date:	
Student's Name:	
Student's Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 2

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Circular HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015

ASSESSED[1] YEAR[2] IN EMPLOYMENT (AYE) OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS (NQSW)[3]: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AYE POLICY FROM 9 November 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. The Degree in Social Work was introduced as the threshold qualification for Social Work in Northern Ireland in September 2004. This was part of an overall package of agreed reforms which also included the AYE, whereby all NQSWs are required to undertake an assessed year in employment, in a social work post. The AYE is a condition of registration for NQSWs with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).

2. The AYE is designed to support the NQSW make the transition from being a social work student to a practising social worker and to develop and strengthen their professional confidence and competence. The NQSW employee will be expected to have achieved a level of competence, decision-making and autonomy within employment by the end of their first year in practice consistent with the standards for a qualified social worker and as outlined by the Revised Guidance for Registrants and their Employers NISCC Guidance (May 2014).

3. The NQSW will be subject to the same employment processes and procedures as any other employee, permanent or temporary, within the employing organisation.

POLICY

4. The policy on AYE for NQSWs in employment was first introduced in April 2006 (Circular: HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) and was replaced by Circular: HSS (OSS) AYE 3/2010. Circular: HSS (OSS) AYE 3/2010 is now replaced by this Circular: HSS (OSS) AYE 2/2015.

---

[1] **Assessed** = The term "assessed" in this context refers to the performance appraisal process within the employing organisation, which is undertaken throughout the prescribed AYE period for the NQSW.

[2] **Year** = In this context, each NQSW should complete 198 working days (7.5 hours = 1 working day) in social work practice. This equates to a full calendar year in employment and may be undertaken either as a continuous year or as incremental periods of employment over a longer period, but which allows the NQSW to complete in full the AYE requirements. Annual leave, statutory holiday entitlement and professional development days are not included in the 198 days.

[3] **NQSWs** = Degree in Social Work graduates newly employed in a social work post.

5. All Health and Social Care Trusts (HSC Trusts) will have arrangements in place to support NQSWs comply with the NISCC registration requirements and guidance for the AYE NISCC Guidance (May 2014).

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

6. The purpose of the policy is:

   (a) to enable NQSWs make the transition from being a student to being a professionally accountable social worker in employment and to develop their knowledge, skills and capacity to function as a registered social worker without condition;

   (b) to ensure NQSWs receive appropriate induction and professional support, including professional supervision, in their first year in employment;

   (c) to allow NQSWs opportunities to demonstrate sustained and effective social work practice in the workplace;

   (d) to require employers to verify, against required standards, that a NQSW can practice in the workplace as a proifessionally accountable social worker and to endorse their fitness to practise and their eligibility to be registered without the AYE condition with the NISCC; and

   (e) to provide assurance to the public that by the end of the AYE, NQSWs are safe to practice as competent:, responsible and professionally accountable practitioners.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

7. Employers' arrangements for the management, support and supervision of NQSWs should be in line with this Circular and current employment processes for all employees joining the HSC workforce. The NISCC Guidance (May 2014) provides guidance on:

   - requirements for a suitable social work post for an AYE Registrant;
   - standards that all social work employers must meet to ensure consistency of experience for all NQSWs during their AYE;
   - the assessment of competence against the required standards of practice; and
   - NISCC quality assurance arrangements for ensuring regional standardisation in terms of employer appraisal of NQSW's performance.

8. The NISCC Guidance should be read in conjunction with this Circular. The NISCC Guidance (May 2014} and associated standards will be used to monitor implementation of the policy and the consistency of arrangements across the HSC Trusts.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES

9. All NQSWs must register with the NISCC on the social work part of the register prior to employment in a social work post. At all times registration must be current.

RECRUITMENT

10. Employers should advertise social work vacancies in the normal way. Social work graduates and social work studeints about to complete their Social Work Degree and who meet the requirements of job specifications will be eligible to apply. All such appointments must be to pas.ts which provide the NQSWs the opportunity to be assessed against required standards of social work practice. The requirements for a suitable post are specified in the NISCC Guidance (May 2014). The NQSW should be clearly identified as such in the employing organisation's Human Resources information system in order that individuals can be tracked through to successful completion.

SUPERVISION AND INDUCTION

11. As with all new employees, NQSWs should receive appropriate induction to the organisation. In the course of the AYE , NQSWs should receive the specified professional supervision and support outlined in the NISCC Guidance (May 2014). Professional supervision must be provided by a qualified, registered social worker and in line with agreed Departmental Policy. The NISCC Guidance (May 2014) sets out the minimum requirements for professional supervision and induction.

WORK ALLOCATION

12. Allocation of work will need to allow NQSWs to engage in the full range of professional social work activity expected of a practising social worker. The work allocated should allow the NQSW to consolidate professional skills and knowledge gained on the Degree and extend their knowledge and skills to being able to work more confidently, independently and accountably. These skills and knowledge are reflected in the required standards identified in the NISCC Guidance (May 2014).

13. Work allocation should be sufficiently challenging so that the NQSW can demonstrate, at the end of their AYE , that they are able to practice safely, competently, confidently and responsibly and at an appropriate level of professional independence as would be expected of a social worker within a framework of professional governance and accountability.

PROFE .SSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

14. All NOSWs should be offered opportunities for professiona l learn ing and development and be afforded suff icient time to avail of these. NQSWs must undertake a minimum of 10 po st-registration training and learning development days4, which are a condition of registratiion. These learn ing opportun ities shou ld focus on facilitating the ongo ing develop ment and expansion of the knowledge and skills base requ ired of a qualified social worker and appropriate t:o the i ndividu al"s job role within the emp loying organisation. The learning acquired over title AYE period should cont ribute to the NQSW's readine ss to achieve recognition within the Profess ional in Pra ctice Framework[5].

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

15. . Employers must be satisfied that NQS\Ns are petiorming at a level that allows for confirmation tha t they are ab le to practise as safe, competent and respons ible socia l workers and therefore suitable for continued regis tration and employment as social workers. This is achie ved through the assessment and appraisal process which is ongo ing throughot th e period of employmen t as an NQSW. The NQSW's line manager, or where the line manager is not a social worker, th e social worker who provides proifessional superv ision (AYE supe rvisor) to the NQSW must assess his/her performance throughout the emp loym ent period. This applies to NQSW s in continuous employm ent as well as to those in shorter periods of employmen t. Where it relates to shorter periods of employment, the AYE supervisor must provide a written reference and Form Ref **AYE4** NISCC Guidance (May 2014) evidencin g achievements during each spe cific per iod of employment and clearly stating competences which still remain outs tanding. Each period of short term emp loyment must aggregate to the equivalent of a full calenda r year.

1'6. The finall performance appraisal for AYE purposes must take place and the final overall achievement recorded on the relevant NISCC proforma to facilitate the re-registrat ion process. Wh ere the line manager is not a qua lified social worker, th e fina l performance app raisal must be signed off by the AYE supervisor iin agreement with the line manager and the authorised signatory from the organ isation.

17. If there are concerns about the suitability of a NQS W, tt is shou ld be addressed with the emplo yee concerned using the normal HR p erformance management processes and as with an y employee, an action ;plan should be put in place to add ress deficits in performance. If the NQSW does not show the requ isite iimprovement. organisational HR processes shou ld be follo wed as they would for any other emp loyee within the organisation.

[4] Development days are time spent on induction, training or other work related development activiti es such as shadowing, reading, research,. AYE support and development groups. These actJivities should relate to the indiv:i du al's PDP.

[5] Following success fu'l comp:letion ofthe AYE a condition will be p:l aced in 1iheiir registraliion requiring them to complete a minimum of two requirements of the Specific Award in tihe PiP framework. This must be achieved by the time of their first three year renewal wirth MSCC.

PAY & CONDITIONS

18. All new NQSWs in HSC Trusts will be placed on the agreed Agenda for Change band for NQSWs. Pay progression will be dependent on a satisfactory outcome of AYE final performance appraisal and registration without the AYE condition on the social work part of the NISCC register. Pay and conditions will remain unchanged for any period of extension of the AYE and associated NISCC registration "with condition" status for the NQSW.

GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL CONSISTENCY

HSC Trust Employer Responsibilities

19. For standardisation purposes, each Trust will ensure that 25% of performance appraisals of NOSWs being appraised in any reporting year are randomly sampled. Records of this process should be maintained and made available on request

20. Line managers' or AYE supervisors' assessments of NOSWs for performance appraisal purposes are an essential component of the process during this period and should be supported by employers.

211. As part of the quality assurance and monitoring arrangements, Trusts should seek feedback from NQSWs, line managers and professional supervisors as to the experience and effectiveness of AYE arrangements. An overview of this feedback should be included in the HSC Trusts' annual reports on the implementation of the AYE policy to the HSC Board as part of the Delegated Statutory Function (DSF} reporting arrangements and reports should be submitted to the Director of Social Care and Children.

Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) Responsibilities

22. The HSCB should maintain professional oversight and scrutiny of AYE arrangements based on HSC Trust annual reports to:

- ensure compliance with this Circular and associated standards;
- recommend improvements in the arrangements; and
- promote regional consistency across HSC Trusts.

A summary and analysis of the implementation of AYE regionally should be Included in the HSCB annual DSF overview report detailing HSC Trusts compliance with the AYE Policy and recommendations for improvement and this report should be submitted to the Chief Social Worlk Office.r in the DHSSPS by an agreed date.

Where appropriate the HSC Board in collaboration with the Trusts will agree action plans to improve and develop AYE arrangemen'ts.

N.1SCC Responsibilities

23. NISCC will wish to satisfy itself of the quality of NQSW evidence used by employers to assess successful completion of the AYE and to verify the suitability of the AYE registrant for registration status as a socia l worke r without condition. This will be carried out by audit of a sample of AYE submission s.

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) Responsibilities

24. RQIA will, as appropriate, monitor compliance with the employer responsibility for this function through inspect ion and service regulat ion.

DHSSPS Responsibilities

25. . The DHSSPS will monitor compliance of the implementa tion of the AYE policy tll rough professional scrutiny of the HSCB overvie w report and will, as
approp riate, make recommendations to improve compliance and strengthen regional cons istency. From t:ime to time the DHSSPS will review this policy and Circular to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose.

N1L COMPLETION

Extension of *Registration*

26. :NISCC will need to be informed in good time of any request for extension of the initial registration "with condition" on the social work part of the register.

27. :NISCC will consider any appl ications for an extension for those who have failed to complete for any reason. NQSWs who fail to com plete will need to apply to iNI SCC for an extension of their current registration status. Any such applicat ion by a NQSW should be accompanied by the employer endorsement with a recommendation as to when the performance app raisal will be undertaken (and llence th e likely proposed length of the period of extension}.

28. Opportunities for further appra isal are subject to continuing registrat ion with :NISCC. NQSWs who, for exceptional reasons , are not available for final performance app raisal at the approp riate stage of their employment should be offered an alte rnative opportunity for appraisal by their employe r., subject to continuing registration with NISCC.

NQSWs IN 0TH ER SECTO RS

29 . In order to support NQSWs in the Crimin al Justice, Education and Voluntary sectors, employers in these sectors will need to ensure appropriate systems are in place to support AYE staff to comply with the NISCC reg istrat ion requirements.

NOSWS FROM OUTSIDE NI

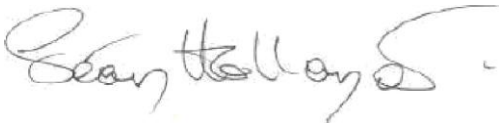
30. NQSWs who qualified outside Northern Ireland (NI) must meet NISCC requirements for registrat ion including the AYE if employed and practising as social workers in any secto r in Northe rn Ireland. Social workers from outside NI who have completed a sustai ned year in social work employment with professional sup ervision, which can be verified through a written employer re ference, will not be subject to AYE condition s of registration.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Queries on this Circular should be addressed to:

Michael Burns,
Office of Social Services
DHSSPS
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAS T
BT4 3S0

Tel: 028 90 528482



SEAN HOLLAND
Ch ief Social Work Officer

2 November 2015

Appendix 3

FUNCTIONAL MAP/KEY ROLES FOR SOCIAL WORK NOS

Key role 1	**Maintain professional accountability**
SW1	Maintain an up to date knowledge and evidence base for social work practice
SW2	Develop social work practice through supervision and reflection
Key role 2	**Practise professional social work**
SW3	Manage your role as a professional social worker
SW4	Exercise professional judgement in social work
SW5	Manage ethical issues, dilemmas and conflicts
SW6	Practise social work in multi-disciplinary contexts
SW7	Prepare professional reports and records relating to people
Key role 3	**Promote engagement and participation**
SW8	Prepare for social work involvement
SW9	Engage people in social work practice
SW10	Support people to participate in decision-making processes
SW11	Advocate on behalf of people
Key role 4	**Assess needs, risks and circumstances**
SW12	Assess needs, risks and circumstances in partnership with those involved
SW13	Investigate harm or abuse
Key role 5	**Plan for person centred outcomes**
SW14	Plan in partnership to address short and longer term issues
SW15	Agree risk management plans to promote independence and responsibility
SW16	Agree plans where there is risk of harm or abuse
Key role 6	**Take actions to achieve change**
SW17	Apply methods and models of social work intervention to promote change
SW18	Access resources to support person centred solutions
SW19	Evaluate outcomes of social work practice
SW20	Disengage at the end of social work involvement

Appendix 4

Personal Development Plan

Use your **Summary of Learning** identified areas for further development to create your initial PDP. PDP should be reviewed and updated at mid-point and final appraisal point.

Identified developmental needs	**Training and learning opportunities to address needs**	**How will this impact on your practice?**	**Achievement timescale. Short, medium and long-term goal setting.**

Professional Development Plan:		Initial Mid-point Final	
Signed (Registrant)		Date	

Signed Line Manager/Mentor	Date

For further information about Registration and Regulation of the social care workforce

Contact

Northern Ireland Social Care Council
4th Floor
James House
Cromac Ave
BT7 2JA

Telephone: **028 9536 2600**

Web: **www.niscc.info**
Email: **registration@niscc.hscni.net**

November 2015 (Version 3)
Updated March 2026