



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Review of the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) Overview of Outcomes of Monitoring 2007/08

FEBRUARY 2010

Produced by:

Department of Health, Social
Services and Public Safety
Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 0728

Web: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Contents

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING REQUIREMENTS OF AYE POLICY	1
Employer Responsibilities	2
NISCC Responsibilities	2
DHSSPS/RQIA Responsibilities	1
3 SCOPE OF THE 2007/08 REVIEW	2
4 FINDINGS	3
Employment Information – Overview 2006 – 2008	3
Employment Information – Overview 2007 – 2008	6
Recruitment Agencies	6
Progress Against Recommendations of 2006/07 Review	7
AYE Systems	9
Professional Development	10
Information and Standardisation	12
Quality Assurance and Monitoring	13
5 CONCLUSIONS	13
6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	14
ANNEX 1 - AYE REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	16

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The introduction of an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) was part of the package of reform of social work training announced in 2001. The intention was that all newly qualified graduates from the Degree in Social Work would undertake an assessed year in employment linked to registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).
- 1.2 A policy Circular (Circular HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) required that from 1 April 2006 all new social work graduates must complete successfully the AYE in compliance with the NISCC (Registration) Rules.
- 1.3 The aims of the AYE policy are:
- (i) To ensure that at the end of the first year in employment newly qualified social workers are safe and competent to practise and are responsible practitioners;
 - (ii) To ensure that newly qualified staff receive appropriate induction, supervision and support required to enable them demonstrate sustained, continuous, effective competence in the workplace ; and
 - (iii) To ensure employers are satisfied that new social work graduates are performing at a level which merits continuing employment as a social worker.
- 1.4 This report provides an overview of the outcomes of the second review of the implementation of the AYE policy conducted by the DHSSPS. This review focuses on new social work entrants to HSC Trusts for the period from 1 July 2007 to December 2008. It also charts improvements to AYE systems and the impact of the policy as benchmarked against findings from the Regional Review of 2006/07.
- 1.5 A number of recommendations are made at the end of the report. These are based on information the HSC Trusts highlighted in their annual review reports as areas which would further enhance consistency of arrangements for AYE. In particular these focus on:
- (i) AYE Systems
 - (ii) Professional Development
 - (iii) Information and Standardisation.
 - (iv) Quality Assurance and Monitoring

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING REQUIREMENTS OF THE AYE POLICY

- 2.1 The AYE policy lays down responsibilities for quality assurance and monitoring of the implementation of the policy as follows.

Employer Responsibilities

- 2.2 For standardisation purposes, each employer will ensure that 25% of performance appraisals of new social work graduate entrants being appraised in

any calendar year are randomly sampled. Records of this process should be maintained and made available on request.

- 2.3 Line managers' assessment of their staff for performance review purposes is an essential component of the process during this period. Employers should ensure appropriate support is in place to assist line managers with this task.

NISCC Responsibilities

- 2.4 NISCC will wish to satisfy itself, from time to time, of the quality of evidence provided to employers by the applicant for registration (Rules 8 (4)(c)).

DHSSPS/RQIA Responsibilities

- 2.5 DHSSPS/RQIA will, as appropriate, monitor compliance with the employer responsibility for this function.
- 2.6 The policy also requires that an annual review of consistency of arrangements is conducted by Directors of Social Services/Social Work to ensure continuing consistency and that appropriate improvements are made to implementing the policy. A report on this annual review and its outcomes should be submitted to the Chief Social Services Officer by 15 April each year.

3. SCOPE OF THE 2007/08 REVIEW

- 3.1 An AYE Review Questionnaire to be completed by 15 April 2009 was issued by the DHSSPS to the five HSC Trusts (see Annex 1). The questionnaire was revised following feedback from the previous review and to reflect the work NISCC had commenced to develop supplementary guidance for AYE Registrants and their Employers. This was a recommendation of the 2006/07 Review.
- 3.2 During the period covered by the 2007/08 Annual Review the NISCC surveyed AYE registrants, including a small number in the Voluntary, Criminal Justice and Education Sectors. The survey was aimed at establishing the experience of AYE registrants of the systems and support arrangements in place during their AYE period. Where relevant findings from the NISCC survey are included in this report.
- 3.3 DHSSPS gathered statistical data on social work graduates who entered Trust employment from June 2007 to December 2008. There were two cohorts of social work students graduating during this period (June 2007 and June 2008) and data was collected against the employment destination of each of these groups. The first period covered was June 2007 to June 2008 and the second period covered was July 2008 to December 2008. For comparison purposes, a broad overview of the employment destinations of AYE as identified in the previous annual review of 2006/07 is also provided.
- 3.4 Trusts comments on implementation of recommendations from the review of AYE arrangements in 2006/07, as well as continued improvements planned to support new social work entrants in Trust employment is also provided.

3.5 During this period of the 2007/08 Annual Review the Reform Implementation Team (RIT) produced policy and guidance materials that both supported and reinforced arrangements for frontline social work staff, including AYEs employed in children’s services. Some Trusts benchmarked their support for AYEs, including those in adult services, against RIT Guidance covering professional training and support, supervision and caseload management. From feedback provided it is evident that implementation of the RIT Guidance has further supported good practice and regional consistency in arrangements for AYE staff.

4. FINDINGS

Employment Information – Overview 2006 – 2008

4.1 In the first year of the AYE in 2006 only the relevant graduate route students entered the HSC Trust workforce so the numbers were small. In this first cohort a total of 72 AYEs entered Trust employment, and the majority 58 (80%) were employed in children and family services.

4.2 During 2007/08 the number of AYEs entering the HSC Trust workforce was 300 and the majority, 241 (80%) were employed in children and families services.

4.3 An overview of information collated by HSC Trusts for both the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Annual Reviews identified that of the 372 AYEs employed, some 299 (80%) of these were in Children and Family Services. The Trust with the highest number of AYEs employed in children’s services during this total period was the WHSCT at 91 (25%) and the lowest number at 59 (16%) was in the NHSCT. **Table 1 provides a breakdown of employment of AYE Registrants by HSCT between 2006-2008.**

Table 1: Employment of AYE Registrants July 2006 – December 2008

	2006 –2007 Annual Review					
	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	TOTAL
Children and Families	7 ¹ (12%)	14 (24%)	16 (28%)	7 (12)	15 (26%)	58
Other (mainly Adults) ²	2 (15%)	7 (54%)	0	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	13
TOTAL	9 (13%)	21 (29%)	16 (22%)	9 (13%)	17 (24%)	72
	2007 –2008 Annual Review					
Children and Families	32 (13%)	47 (20%)	34 (14%)	58 (24%)	70 (29%)	241
Adults	18 (31%)	14 (24%)	10 (17%)	13 (22%)	4 (7%)	59
TOTAL	50 (17%)	61 (20%)	44 (15%)	71 (24%)	74 (25%)	300
OVERALL TOTAL for 2006-2008	59 (16%)	82 (22%)	60 (16%)	80 (22%)	91 (25%)	372

¹Trust return unclear as to location of 1 AYE

² Broad data collection methodology used (2006)

Employment Information – June 2007- June 2008

4.4 Between June 2007 and June 2008 a total of 143 AYE registrants were employed by HSC Trusts. There could be some double counting in this figure as some social workers changed employer within the year. The smallest number, 13 (9%), were employed in the South Eastern Trust and the largest number, 40 (28%), in the Western Trust. Of the 143, 111 (78%) were employed in Children and Families services. **Table 2** provides a further breakdown of AYE destination by job setting.

TABLE 2: Employment of AYE Registrants 1 June 2007 – 30 June 2008

Job Setting	1 June – 2007 - 30 June 2008					
	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	TOTAL
Children and Families						
Initial Assessment Team (Gateway team)	1	2	1	1	7	12
Residential Child Care	0	7	5	7	9	28
Family Centre	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other (please specify) ³	9	19	5	17	19	69
TOTAL	10 (9%)	28 (25%)	11 (10%)	25 (23%)	37 (33%)	111
Adult Service						
Older People	2	3	2	2	1	10
Mental Health	4	0	0	4	0	8
Health and Physical Disability	0	1	0	1	1	3
Sensory Impairment	0	0	0	0	1	1
Learning Disability	2	1 (Residential)	0	0	0	3
Other (please specify) ⁴	0	4	0	3	0	7
TOTAL	8 (25%)	9 (28%)	2 (6%)	10 (31%)	3 (9%)	32
OVERALL TOTAL	18 (13%)	37 (26%)	13 (9%)	35 (24%)	40 (28%)	143

³ Other includes: Family Child Care teams, LAC, Family Placements, Leaving & Aftercare, Early Years, Fostering and Children's Disability Teams

⁴ Other includes: Hospital Social Work

Employment Information July 2008 – December 2008

- 4.5 From July 2008 to 31 December 2008 a further 157 AYE registrants were employed by the Trusts. The smallest number, 24 (15%), were employed by the Belfast Trust and the largest number, 36 (23%) were employed by the Southern Trust. Of the 157, 130 (82%) were employed in Children and Families services. **Table 3** provides a further breakdown of AYE destination by job setting.

TABLE 3: Employment of AYE Registrants 1 July 2008 – 31 December 2008

Job Setting	1 July 2008 - 31 December 2008					
	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	TOTAL
Children and Families						
Initial Assessment Team (Gateway team)	2	4	4	5	9	24
Residential Child Care	3	2	4	5	3	17
Family Centre	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other (please specify) ¹	17	13	15	23	21	89
TOTAL	22 (17%)	19 (15%)	23 (18%)	33 (25%)	33 (25%)	130
Adult Service						
Older People	3	3	3	1	0	10
Mental Health	4	0	2	2	0	8
Health and Physical Disability	3	1	3	0	1	8
Sensory Impairment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning Disability	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other (please specify) ²	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10 (37%)	5 (19%)	8 (30%)	3 (11%)	1 (4%)	27
OVERALL TOTAL	32 (20%)	24 (15%)	31 (20%)	36 (23%)	34 (22%)	157

¹Other includes: Family Child Care teams, LAC, Family Placements, Leaving & Aftercare, Early Years, Fostering and Children's Disability Teams

² Other includes: Hospital Social Work

Employment Information: Overview June 2007 – December 2008

4.6 Between June 2007 and December 2008 a total of 300 AYE registrants were employed by the Trusts. The smallest number, 44 (15%) were employed in the South Eastern Trust and the largest number, 74 (25%), in the Western Trust. Of the 300, 241 (80%) were employed in Children and Families services. From information provided by the HSC Trusts, 36 (15%) of the 241 AYE registrants in Children and Family Services were employed in Gateway Teams and 45 (19%) out of the same cohort of 241 in residential child care. The WHSCT had the highest number of AYE, 16 (44%) out of 36 employed in Gateway teams.

Table 4 provides a further breakdown of AYE destinations by job setting.

TABLE 4: Employment of AYE Registrants 1 June 2007 – 1 December 2008

Job Setting	1 June – 2007 – 1 December 2008					
	NHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	TOTAL
Children and Families						
Initial Assessment Team (Gateway team)	3	6	5	6	16	36
Residential Child Care	3	9	9	12	12	45
Family Centre	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other (please specify) ⁵	26	32	20	40	40	158
TOTAL	32 (13%)	47 (20%)	34 (14%)	58 (24%)	70 (29%)	241
Adult Service						
Older People	5	6	5	3	1	20
Mental Health	8	0	2	6	0	16
Health and Physical Disability	3	2	3	1	2	11
Sensory Impairment	0	0	0	0	1	1
Learning Disability	2	2 ⁶	0	0	0	4
Other (please specify) ⁷	0	4	0	3	0	7
TOTAL	18 (31%)	14 (24%)	10 (17%)	13 (22%)	4 (7%)	59
OVERALL TOTAL	50 (17%)	61 (20%)	44 (15%)	71 (24%)	74 (25%)	300

Recruitment Agencies

4.7 It was reported that 33 (11% of 300) new social work graduates (compared to 5 in 2006/07 (7% of 72) were employed through a recruitment agency during 2007/08 and all were placed in posts which require a social work qualification. The Belfast and Southern Trusts appointed the lowest number (5 and 6 respectively); the Western and South-Eastern Trusts appointed the highest

⁵ Other includes: Family Child Care teams, LAC, Family Placements, Leaving & Aftercare, Early Years, Fostering and Children's Disability Teams

⁶ One AYE in Learning Disability is not in Social Work post.

⁷ Other includes: Hospital Social Work

number (10 and 12 respectively); there were no reported appointments through a recruitment agency in the Northern Trust for the same period.

Progress Against Recommendations of 2006/07 Review

- 4.8 Some Trusts provided detailed information about their progress in implementation of the recommendations from the previous regional review of 2006/07. It was evident from this information that some Trusts had made significantly more progress than others and through the audit and quality assurance process were now further refining and consolidating their support arrangements. All Trusts have made some progress in respect of the 2006/07 recommendations and where further work is needed, plans are in place to help address improvements.
- 4.9 The 2006/07 recommendations which all Trusts generally referred to as needing most attention were in the following areas:
- HR tracking systems
 - Supervision and Performance Appraisal
 - Personal Development Plans
 - Workload Allocation.
- 4.10 An overview of progress against the recommendations of the 2006/07 annual review is contained in **Figure 1** and further detail is provided in sections 4.8 – 4.28 of this report.

Figure 1 Overview of Progress Against Recommendations from 2006/07

RECOMMENDATIONS 2006/07	
1.	<p>All Trusts should establish formal feedback mechanisms for both AYE staff and line managers/supervisors as part of their quality assurance and audit processes and this feedback should be reflected in subsequent reviews.</p> <p><i>From information provided formal feedback mechanisms for both AYE staff and line managers/supervisors are available in each Trust. Three Trusts however provided detailed information in their annual review return about content of their feedback. For these Trusts the variety of methods used to elicit information, such as structured questionnaires, focus groups or forum meetings, could be seen to have informed focused action plans.</i></p>
2.	<p>Trusts must ensure information and support is provided to all Line Managers of AYE personnel, regardless of where they are working.</p> <p><i>All Trusts indicated they provided information, support and guidance to line managers and AYE and that this was evidenced through the Trusts quality and monitoring processes.</i></p>
3.	<p>All AYE staff, including those on temporary contracts, should be offered appropriate opportunities for professional development as set out in the AYE Circular.</p> <p><i>All Trusts report professional development opportunities are in place for all staff including those on temporary contracts.</i></p>

4. Employers should ensure all AYE staff have a PDP in place in line with the PSS Development and Training Strategy 2006 – 2016 strategic target. The PDP should build on the individual learning plan that accompanies the student from their qualifying training into the AYE (NISCC Practice Learning Requirements, June 2003).

One Trust reported that personal development plans were not fully in place and that this was in keeping with the trend generally in the Trust's workforce. Several other Trusts also indicated that implementation of PDPs was variable and that the need to establish coherence with KSF and other internal Trust HR processes was a critical factor.

5. The principles and standards of the regional supervision policy should be applied consistently to all AYE staff across all Programmes of Care.

It was reported that all AYEs received supervision and support however it was also noted that the frequency was variable and that in some Trusts this was more likely to be of a monthly nature.

Trusts reported that additional mentoring and support to AYEs was being provided by senior practitioners, principal practitioners and training team staff.

6. The NISCC will work with Trusts to develop guidance to address standardisation of evidence and improve regional consistency.

Trust employers have engaged with NISCC to inform development of additional supplementary guidance for AYEs and employers.

This work is now completed and the guidance will be issued shortly.

7. Trusts should develop action plans, with time scales, to address issues identified through the audit process. In particular, Trusts should ensure consistency of arrangements across their individual Trust area. Progress on addressing identified issues should be reported on in the subsequent annual review report.

All Trusts submitted action plans as part of their annual monitoring returns.

Four Trusts had action plans with specified timescales, lead responsibilities and reporting arrangements clearly noted.

8. DHSSPS Guidance on caseload management HSS (OSSGUIDE/RIT) 1-2008 should be used to assist in workload management for AYE staff.

Feedback across the Trusts indicates implementation of the guidance in respect of caseload management in children's services is problematic and further work is required.

AYE Systems

Action Plans to Support AYEs

- 4.11 All of the Trusts provided information and action plans which detailed summary of progress since the first review of Aye systems. Four of the Trusts clearly specified outcomes, timescales and the lead person/department responsible for implementation. Where such detail had been provided it was more evident that proactive progress by the Trusts to develop and extend their arrangements for AYE staff was being made.

HR Tracking

- 4.12 Two Trusts indicated that further work was needed to ensure human resource systems adequately track AYEs. One Trust for example reported that difficulties with tracking AYEs had contributed to “poor attendance” at their AYE Forum. The same Trust also noted concern about the robustness of its interim manual systems to track AYEs who move between temporary contracts. Another Trust cited “delays in being able to access accurate information from HR” as contributing to difficulties to complete sampling of AYE evidence within the timeframe required for the annual monitoring return.

Recruitment Agencies

- 4.13 The number of AYE staff being employed through recruitment agencies has increased. One Trust noted the reason for this as being “increased demand in child protection referrals” coinciding with significant recruitment difficulties and staff absence”. For other Trusts however it would appear that agency recruitment was generally used as a short term recruitment measure in response to difficulties caused by staff illness, maternity cover, or other short term absence.

Regional Consistency

- 4.14 In terms of actions to improve regional consistency all Trusts indicated they were working with the NISCC to develop minimum standards for support of AYEs which would improve regional consistency of arrangements.

Recommendations to Support AYE Systems

- Trusts to update action plans and report on progress of implementation as part of the annual review report. Action plans to also identify lead person, timescales and accountability arrangements within the Trust.
- Trusts must have HR Tracking Systems to collate information about agency, temporary and permanent AYE staff.
- Trusts to consider sharing of information including best practice examples, to improve regional consistency.

Professional Development

Induction

- 4.15 All Trusts reported that they provide staff with induction to NISCC induction standards and that a range of measures had been taken since the 2006/07 review to improve the induction experience for all AYE staff. For example specific induction programmes and updating of AYE guidance materials have been completed. The NISCC Survey of AYE registrants completed during the period covered by this Annual Review showed that 85% of AYEes reported they received induction into their post.
- 4.16 Three Trusts provided detail of feedback from AYE staff about their induction, as part of their quality monitoring process; this suggested there remained room for continued improvement. In particular structure, content of induction and consistency in recording outcomes was noted. Some newly appointed social workers also commented on a lack of clarity as to the purpose of AYE whilst others who had been in placement with their employing Trust, reported no discernable difference between their student induction programme and that as an AYE. The NISCC Survey showed that some 73% of AYEes indicated they had received induction which clarified what was expected of them while undertaking the AYE.
- 4.17 All Trusts indicated in their action plans intentions to update guidelines in respect of induction of AYEes and incorporate outcomes from the NISCC supplementary guidance to strengthen induction for AYEes.

Supervision

- 4.18 From information provided by the Trusts it was evident that regular supervision was in place but that there continued to be variations in the levels of support and frequency of supervision to AYEes. Managers reported that the lack of practice learning experience among newly qualified social workers about children and family services, impacted on the level of support and supervision line managers needed to put in place. Despite this, results from the NISCC Survey showed that 96% of newly qualified registrants received supervision and for the majority, this was at least monthly. The NISCC Survey also showed that generally there was no difference in the frequency of supervision between family and children services and adult services.
- 4.19 All of the Trusts referenced intentions to adhere to the regional supervision policy, developed by the Reform Implementation team (RIT) which was issued by DHSSPS in 2008. However the returns indicate there are difficulties in implementing the policy on supervision. One Trust for example noted that “due to the pressure of work in Children’s Services it is difficult to adhere to fortnightly supervision”. This issue is also highlighted in the NISCC Survey of AYE registrants in that 51% of respondents stated they received supervision on a fortnightly basis. As a consequence Trusts have been developing a range of approaches to help alleviate pressures for example, training team staff, senior practitioners and principal practitioners have assisted with support, mentoring and where appropriate, professional supervision of AYE staff. The NISCC Survey also provided information about this in that 51% of AYE staff reported they received mentoring and support, in addition to their line manager’s input.

Training and Development

- 4.20 All of the Trusts were providing professional development opportunities and generally this seemed to be part of an ongoing planned programme where training and development staff and operational managers contributed. The responses from registrants to the NISCC Survey confirmed that 93% of AYEs received training. One Trust elaborated further by indicating that the “assurance process provided clear evidence of a strong focus on professional development opportunities “ and that AYEs subject to sampling in that particular Trust, “all had written at least one reflective commentary on a learning event”. Several of the Trusts commented that the professional development of AYE registrants could be improved by setting it within the context of preparation for accredited post qualifying social work training. For example the action plan of one Trust specified prioritising AYE staff to attend training identified as a pre requisite for entry to the Post Qualifying Initial Professional Development Award.

Personal Development Plans

- 4.21 The monitoring returns reported that the approach to PDPs is not consistent within and across Trusts. Findings from the NISCC Survey provide further information by reporting that the number of Aye registrants with a PDP in place is 64%. Two Trusts reported that personal development plans (PDP) were not yet implemented for AYEs but commented that this was in tandem with progress on PDPs in their workforce generally. One Trust suggested that continuity in terms of the PDP was not helped by the absence of qualifying summary learning plans at the beginning of the AYEs period of employment. From evidence provided, it was apparent that some AYEs considered their summary learning plans as of limited value when entering employment as at the time of writing they “did not understand or fully comprehend their importance”. Several Trusts referenced the need to harmonise AYE learning and development with the knowledge and skills framework and HR performance appraisals.

Performance Appraisal

- 4.22 In line with Trust policies, it was reported by each Trust that they have systems for six monthly and end of year performance appraisals. All Trusts assessed AYE registrants against the six key social work roles as set out in the NI Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work. There continues to be evidence in some Trust returns that the quantity and quality of evidence required for assessing successful completion of the AYE varies across Trusts. Some AYEs also indicated that performance appraisal was not always managed as an ongoing process. Consequently some AYEs did not “perceive any link between their probationary period/probationary report and the requirements of AYE”.

Recommendations to Support Professional Development

- Trusts must ensure that Induction arrangements for AYEs includes:
 - the organisation and their post; and
 - the requirements of the AYE.
- Trusts must apply the principles and standards of the regional Supervision Policy to all AYEs in all programmes of care and report on implementation of the Supervision Policy.

- NISCC must work with approved course providers to ensure that all newly qualified graduates have a summary of learning at the end of the Degree.
- Trust must ensure all AYE staff have a PDP in place and that this is kept under review. The PDP should build on the individual learning plan that accompanies the student from their qualifying training into the AYE (NISCC Practice Learning Requirements, June 2003).
- Trust must work with NISCC to address standardisation of evidence used for performance appraisal and regional consistency.

Information and Standardisation

Information/Guidance for Line Managers

- 4.23 Each Trust provided information which indicated that line managers across all programmes of care had access to guidance either in the form of materials, advice or workshops to support consistency of support to AYE. All managers it was reported were provided with the HPSS Circular and the NISCC Guidance and each Trust reported that mechanisms were in place for sharing AYE issues with senior management.

AYEs and Workload

- 4.24 Issues about complexity and numbers of cases held by AYE were reported by some Trusts to be a concern. The Trusts also noted that RIT Guidance on caseload management was difficult to implement and that an approach within adult services needed developed. This is an area requiring further work and one which RIT is currently taking forward.

Line Managers and Workload

- 4.25 Where there was more than one AYE in a team, several Trusts referred to the impact on workload of line managers, particularly the requirement to provide fortnightly supervision.

Grievance Procedure

- 4.26 All Trusts have appeals procedures in place although they may not always be specific to the AYE but are part of the Trusts normal grievance procedure.

Recommendations to Support Information and Standardisation

- Trusts to ensure workloads facilitate the newly qualified worker to practise the 6 key social work roles and that workloads are commensurate with the AYE's level of competence and confidence.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Feedback from AYE, Line Managers and Supervisors

- 4.27 Each Trust had some form of obtaining feedback either through focus groups, questionnaires, established AYE forums or a combination of some/ all of these. Across all Trusts reporting to the professional social work forum as to the issues affecting AYE staff and their progress was identified as a regular feature. Three Trusts provided an overview of their feedback mechanism including analysis of comments received from AYE staff, line managers and supervisors. The two remaining Trusts reported that they were in the process of developing more formal feedback mechanisms as part of their quality assurance processes and audit of AYE systems.

Recommendation to Support Quality Assurance and Monitoring

- All Trusts must include an overview in annual returns of findings from:
 - (i) feedback mechanisms for both AYE staff and line managers/supervisors; and
 - (ii) 25% sampling of AYE performance.

Implementation of the AYE Policy and Monitoring within the Trusts

- 4.28 In all Trusts the officer responsible for the implementation of the AYE policy is an Assistant Director with responsibility for either governance/quality or/and workforce development and training. All Trusts have mechanisms in place for sharing AYE issues with senior management such as sharing findings from the Annual Review with Trust professional social work forums.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This review is based on the second year of the implementation of the AYE policy and Trusts in general indicated significant improvements have been made. Through the audit and quality assurance process all Trusts have identified areas in need of further progress with all Trusts having plans in place to improve arrangements.
- 5.2 Implementation of the AYE policy continues to be an important element in ensuring strong professional supports for newly qualified social workers at the point of entry into the workforce and for their first year in practice.

6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

AYE Systems

- 6.1 Trusts to update action plans and report on progress of implementation as part of the annual review report. Action plans to also identify lead person, timescales and accountability arrangements within the Trust.
- 6.2 Trusts must have a HR Tracking Systems to collate information about agency, temporary and permanent AYE staff.
- 6.3 Trusts to consider sharing of information including best practice examples, to improve regional consistency.

Professional Development

- 6.4 Trusts must ensure that Induction arrangements for AYE includes:
 - the organisation and their post; and
 - the requirements of the AYE.
- 6.5 Trusts must apply the principles and standards of the regional Supervision Policy to all AYE in all programmes of care and report on implementation of the Supervision Policy.
- 6.6 NISCC must work with approved course providers to ensure that all newly qualified graduates have a summary of learning at the end of the Degree.
- 6.7 Trusts must ensure all AYE staff have a PDP in place and that this is kept under review. The PDP should build on the individual learning plan that accompanies the student from their qualifying training into the AYE (NISCC Practice Learning Requirements, June 2003).
- 6.8 Trusts must work with NISCC to address standardisation of evidence used for performance appraisal and regional consistency.

Information and Standardisation

- 6.9 Trusts to ensure workloads facilitate the newly qualified worker to practise the 6 key social work roles and that workloads are commensurate with the AYE level of competence and confidence.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

- 6.10 All Trusts must include an overview in annual returns of findings from:
 - (i) feedback mechanisms for both AYE staff and line managers/supervisors; and
 - (ii) 25% sampling of AYE performance.

ASSESSED YEAR IN EMPLOYMENT REVIEW (2007/2008) QUESTIONNAIRE TO EMPLOYERS

INTRODUCTION

The AYE policy (Circular HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) lays down responsibilities for quality assurance and monitoring of the implementation of the policy. An annual review of consistency of arrangements for AYE, conducted by Directors of Social Services/Social Work is also part of that implementation process.

This review questionnaire issued by DHSSPS and analysis of its findings, will contribute to a Regional Review Report covering the period of 2007/08. Information received on improvement to AYE systems, and the impact of the policy, will be benchmarked against findings from the Regional Review of 2006/07.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

In this section please give information on all new staff employed subject to the AYE up to 31 December 2008.

1. (a) Please complete Table 1 below which provides an overview of staff subject to AYE in your organisation for 2007/08
- (b) Please identify the client group and settings in which AYE staff were employed. Give numbers for each period specified in Table 1. If the staff member worked in more than one team/setting, place them in the team/setting where they spent most time.

TABLE 1 Employment of All AYE Registrants 1/6/2007 – 31/12/2008

CLIENT GROUP	1 Jun 2007 – 30 Jun 2008	1 July 2008 – 31 Dec 2008
Children and Families		
Initial Assessment Team (Gateway team)		
Residential Child Care		
Family Centre		
Other (please specify)		
Adult Service		
Older People		
Mental Health		
Health and Physical Disability		
Sensory Impairment		
Learning Disability		
Other (please specify)		
TOTAL		

2. Are there any AYE staff who were employed from 1 June 2006 – 31 May 2007 who have not yet completed?

Yes No

Please specify total numbers

Total

Please give brief explanation

3. How many AYE staff were/are employed on a temporary basis through a recruitment agency?

2007/2008 _____
Don't know _____

4. Do temporary staff have access to professional development opportunities?
Please comment if necessary

Yes No

5. Were/are all new social work graduates employed in posts which require a social work qualification?⁸

Yes No

If 'no', please give details of the number of staff and which posts they were employed in.

⁸ This is to differentiate between social work posts which require a social work qualification and social care posts which specify a social work qualification as one of a list of appropriate qualifications eg senior care assistant.

6. Were/are all social work graduates employed in posts where they had, or have, the opportunity to practise the 6 key social work roles?

Yes No

If 'no' please give details of how access to the full range of social work practice was/is being facilitated?

AYE SYSTEMS

In this section please provide information on AYE systems.

7. (a) Has the Trust's Quality Assurance and Monitoring Recommendations and findings from the 2007/08 Regional Review been fully implemented?

Yes No

Please attach action plan with summary of progress, since First Review of AYE systems in 2007/08.

- (b) Please provide information on actions that have been taken to improve consistency in arrangements for AYE across all Programmes of Care within the Trust Area?

- (c) Please provide details of any action taken to improve regional consistency in arrangements for AYE staff.

8. Please tick YES or NO against each of the following to indicate if systems are in place/have been available for AYE staff. Please provide an explanation where no has been ticked

- (a) HR systems to track AYE progress Yes No
- (b) Induction Yes No
- (c) Professional Supervision Yes No
- (d) Personal Development Plans Yes No
- (e) AYE Professional Development Opportunities Yes No
- (f) Performance Appraisal - 6 monthly Yes No
- end year Yes No
- (g) 25% Sample AYE Performance Yes No
- (h) Appeals Procedure Yes No

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

In this section please provide information about quality assessment and monitoring.

9. Has the Trust established formal feedback mechanisms for AYE staff, line managers /supervisors?

Yes No

If yes, please attach summary of findings.

10. On the basis of this year's Quality Assurance and Monitoring what improvements are you recommending to take forward into 2009/10?

Please comment.

11. How is implementation of the AYE policy being monitored within the Trust, particularly views of senior managers on impact of the policy on supporting newly qualified social workers to demonstrate competence in the workplace.

Please comment

12. Any other comments

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY **15 APRIL 2008** TO
VERONICA CALLAGHAN, ROOM C3.5, CASTLE BUILDINGS, STORMONT,
BELFAST BT4 3SQ. EMAIL: veronica.callaghan@dhsspsni.gov.uk.