

THE ASSESSED YEAR IN EMPLOYMENT

FOR

NEW SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES

DISCUSSION PAPER ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

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1 SEPTEMBER 2004 – 30 NOVEMBER 2004 (Response deadline)

INTRODUCTION

1. Social work education has been undergoing major reform with the introduction of a new degree from September 2004. The total package of reforms as announced by Minister in 2001 included the intention to have all new social work graduates undertake an assessed year in employment, linked to registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).
2. This paper sets out the policy on the assessed year in employment, its purpose and a process for developing arrangements in good time for the first outputs from the degree. It also identifies a range of implementation issues for discussion.
3. A workshop on 21 June 2004 was the first step in a process of discussion and engagement with key interests to identify and consider all the implementation issues to inform, in due course, the content of a circular to the service. This paper has been amended in the light of discussion at the workshop and subsequent advice from some participants.

POLICY

4. From 1 April 2006, all new social work graduates will need to complete successfully the “assessed year in employment” in compliance with the requirements for registration as set out in NISCC (Registration) Rules 2004: Part II 7(3).

Purpose of the Policy

5. The purpose of the policy is threefold:
 - (a) to satisfy NISCC and the public on the competence of a social work graduate to practise as a fully accountable social worker;
 - (b) to ensure that employers are satisfied that social work graduates are performing at a level which merits continuing employment as a social worker.

- (c) to allow the new social work graduate the opportunity to consolidate learning and to demonstrate sustained, continuous, effective competence in the workplace linked to continuing registration requirements.

Process in preparation for implementation of the policy

6. This paper is now being circulated to all key interests. All responses should be received by 30 November 2004. Please see paragraph 33 for the address.
7. By February 2005, the Circular will be issued to the service. This will allow more than a year for employers and managers to ensure that all parts of the service are ready to receive the first social work graduate entrants from June 2006.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

8. Employers have a responsibility to all new employees in keeping with their responsibility as set out in the NISCC Code for Employers. Arrangements for new social work graduate entrants should be in line with current employment practice.

Registration Requirements for new social work graduates

9. All new social work graduates must register with NISCC on the social work part of the register prior to employment in a social work post. At all times registration must be current. See section 7 and 8 of NISCC (Registration) Rules 2004 (attached).

NOTE⁽¹⁾: *The implication of Section 7 of the Rules is that initial registration as a new social work graduate is for one year only.*

NOTE⁽²⁾: *NISCC is preparing guidance on the requirements for post registration training and learning. This will include the assessed year in employment.*

Recruitment

10. Employers will advertise social work vacancies in the normal way and all registered social work graduates will be eligible to apply as will social work students expecting to graduate within a timeframe appropriate to the filling of the vacancy. All such appointments must be to posts which require social workers. The new social work graduate entrants should be clearly identified as such in the human resources information system with a time restriction (see 9 above). Human Resources Directors will need to ensure a system is in place for tracking individual progress through to successful completion. This system must be in place by 30 June 2006.

Pay & Conditions

11. All new social work graduate entrants will be placed on the first point of the current social work salary scale. Pay progression will be dependent on a satisfactory outcome of assessment. (See also paragraph 18).

Supervision and Induction

12. As with all new employees, appropriate induction, supervision and support must be available to new social work graduate entrants during their assessed year in employment. Supervision must be available from a professionally qualified social worker, in the event of the line manager not being a qualified social worker.

Work allocation

13. Allocation of work will need to allow the new social work graduate entrant to cover the six key roles in the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work. It is essential that a broad range of experience is available if the new social work graduate entrant is to succeed on assessment.

Professional Development

14. All employees should be offered opportunities for professional development and time to avail of these. For new social work graduate entrants, such opportunities should focus on facilitating the ability to implement the six key roles in order to enable them to be successful at the point of assessment.

Assessment

15. Employers must be satisfied that the new social work graduate entrant is performing at a level that allows for confirmation as a social worker and therefore confirmation in continuing employment as a social worker.
16. Assessment of standards and managing performance is part of normal supervision responsibilities.
17. Final Assessment must be available and easily accessible by all in the eleventh month of their employment. It may consist of selected supervisor records and summary, the six-month interim performance report and reflections from learning in practice from the new social work graduate entrant which will also have been rated by the supervisor.
18. Written confirmation of the outcome of assessment from the employer should then be provided for the employee to use with NISCC regarding registration status. (See also paragraphs 21 and 22).

Funding of Final Assessment

19. Receipt of confirmation of successful assessment and continuing registration will attract a payment of £300 to employers as a contribution to the costs of assessment.

Salary Progression

20. Production by the employee of written confirmation of continuing social work registration on the social work part of the register with NISCC will allow salary progression.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Employer responsibilities

21. For standardisation purposes, each employer will ensure that 25% of assessments of the actual number of new social work graduate entrants being assessed in any calendar year are randomly sampled. A panel consisting of no less than 50% managers* will consider this sample. Voluntary sector employers will be encouraged to operate a similar arrangement.
22. Line managers' assessment of their staff is an essential component of the process during the assessed year. Employers should ensure appropriate supports are in place to assist line managers with this task.

NISCC responsibilities

23. 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/HPSSRIA responsibilities

24. DHSSPS/ HPSSRIA will, as appropriate, monitor compliance with the employer responsibility for this function.

Non Completion

Registration

25. NISCC will need to be informed in good time of any request for extension.
26. NISCC will consider any applications for an extension to the Assessed Year in Employment for those who have failed to complete for any reason. New social work graduate entrants who fail to complete will need to apply to NISCC for an extension of registration on the social work part of the register. Any such application by a new social work graduate entrant should be accompanied by the employer endorsement with a recommendation as to when a fresh assessment can reasonably be undertaken (and hence the likely proposed length of the period of extension).
27. Opportunities for further assessment are subject to continuing registration with NISCC. New social work graduate entrants who, for exceptional reasons, are not available for assessment in the eleventh month of their employment should be offered appropriate opportunities for assessment, subject to continuing registration with NISCC.

Salary Progression

28. Pay and conditions will remain unchanged for any period of extension of the 'assessed year in employment' status.

* "Managers" can be service managers, line managers, human resources managers.

Appeals Procedure

29. Employers will need to ensure appropriate appeals procedures are in place for the assessed year in employment.

NOTE: *New social work graduates from outside Northern Ireland must meet NISCC requirements for registration including the assessed year in employment.*

Regional Consistency

30. Employers have agreed the need for a consistent approach across all Trusts and, within Trusts, across Programmes of Care and Settings. An annual review should be conducted by Directors of Social Services/Social Work to ensure continuing consistency and appropriate consistent improvements are made to the implementation of the policy.

Consultation Process

31. You are invited to comment on all aspects of the implementation process identified above. It would be helpful if you would specify the relevant heading and paragraph number from the paper linked to your comments. Please use the heading "Other Issues" if you have identified any issues not addressed above.
32. It would be helpful if you could let us know your current job role and therefore the perspective from which you are approaching the paper. Secondly, please confirm if your response is a personal one or an organisational one.
33. Responses should be returned to Tim Johnston, Social Services Inspectorate, Room C4.22, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ by 30 November 2004.

Appendix 1

Application for registration upon completion of degree course

7. — (1) Upon -
- (a) the successful completion of a degree course; and
 - (b) before undertaking any period of assessed employment required by the Council,
- a student shall apply to the Council for registration in the part of the register reserved for social workers.
- (2) An application for registration in accordance with paragraph (1) shall be treated as a new application for registration and the provisions of rule 4 shall apply.
- (3) Where an application in accordance with paragraph (1) is granted by the Council, the registrant's entry in the register will remain effective for one year commencing with the date of the granting of the application by the Council or the duration of the period of assessed employment specified by the Council, whichever is the later.

Reference to the Registration Committee

8. — (1) This rule shall not apply to students.
- (2) Where an application for renewal of registration is granted by the Council, the registrant's entry in the register will be effective for a further period of three years subject to removal in accordance with the provisions of these Rules or of the Council's Conduct Rules.
- (3) Applications for renewal of registration shall be made on the form approved by the Council for the purpose.
- (4) The Council shall only grant an application to renew registration where —
- (a) it is satisfied that the registrant has satisfactorily fulfilled any conditions attached to the registrant's registration; and
 - (b) it has received satisfactory evidence, as set out in rule 4(3) above, of an applicant's —
 - (i) good character;
 - (ii) good conduct;
 - (iii) good health (including physical and mental fitness to perform the work expected of persons registered in the part of the register in which registration is sought); and
 - (iv) competence;
 - (c) it has received satisfactory evidence that an applicant has completed the post registration and learning requirements set out in SCHEDULE 3; and
 - (d) subject to rule 25, it has received payment of any renewal of registration fee specified by the Council.