

The Assessed Year in Employment: The importance of getting it right.

Social work education in the United Kingdom is producing highly qualified graduates entering an under resourced and highly pressurised working environment. Understanding how competent and confident these graduates feel can help the profession better prepare for and support the transition into the workplace. Understanding of this can help to raise the standards of the profession, public confidence and staff retention.

The aim of this paper is to share preliminary results from my research with newly qualified social workers in Northern Ireland. With the proposed introduction of an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) in England and Wales as early as 2012, this research seeks to understand newly qualified social workers perceptions of their readiness to practice and the reasons for this. The management of the AYE is a critical issue, should it be managed by the awarding university/college or by the employer?

The proposed paper will share knowledge of, and facilitate discussion regarding the support needs and expectations of newly qualified social workers. The research is in relation to the impact of the assessed year in employment, and in recording and understanding the changes to their perceptions of their readiness to practice.

Initial findings (after Phase 1 of 2) have identified a number of important issues such as the importance of having a mentoring figure during education and in particular at the start of their new jobs and the disparate approach to the induction and supervision of new employees and their assessed year.

The research can help to inform and raise issues surrounding the AYE and will help to provide lessons for the remainder of the UK.