



# **Northern Ireland Social Care Council**

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

**Guidance for Registrants and  
their Employers**

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# Section 1 Introduction to the AYE

## Introduction

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) was established in October 2001 to protect people who use social care services and raise standards in social care training and practice. This will be achieved by promoting education and training for staff and by registering and regulating the social care workforce.

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 the Minister in 2001 included the intention to have all new social work graduates undertake the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE), linked to registration with the NISCC.

Government policy (Circular HSS (SSI) AYE 1/2005) requires that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 all new social work graduates must complete successfully the AYE in compliance with the NISCC (Registration) Rules 2004: Part II 7<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of this policy is threefold:

- (a) To satisfy the 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 the new social work employees are performing at a level which merits continuing employment as a social worker; and
- (c) To allow the new social work graduate the opportunity to demonstrate sustained, continuous, effective competence in the workplace linked to continuing registration requirements.

## Purpose of this Publication

The purpose of this document is to specify the NISCC's requirements for registrants regarding the AYE and to assist employers and the AYE registrant to comply with the registration rules. The NISCC also intends to produce a leaflet for final year students on the change in their registration status from student to AYE registrant.

New social work graduates entering the assessed year are employees, not students. They are, therefore, subject to the employment practice of their employer. NISCC guidance should complement and enhance good employment practice on the induction, supervision, appraisal, training and support of new employees.

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<sup>1</sup> Revised Registration Rules 2005 now apply

**During the AYE the registrant will be expected to demonstrate, as appropriate to their post, that they have maintained their competence, in the employment situation, in the six key roles specified in the National Occupational Standards for Social Work and in the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work**

The six key roles are as follows:

1. Prepare for, and work with individuals, families, carers, groups and communities to assess their needs and circumstances.
2. Plan, carry out, review and evaluate social work practice, with individuals, families, carers, groups, communities and other professionals.
3. Support individuals to represent their needs, views and circumstances and to achieve greater independence.
4. Manage risk to individuals, families, carers, groups, communities, self and colleagues.
5. Manage and be accountable, with supervision and support, for their own social work practice within their organisation.
6. Demonstrate and be responsible for professional competence in social work practice.

Note: A full copy of the National Occupational Standards for Social Work 2003 can be downloaded from the NISCC website:

[www.niscc.info/careers/occup\\_stands/nos\\_socwork.htm](http://www.niscc.info/careers/occup_stands/nos_socwork.htm)

Copies of the Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work can be obtained from the NISCC

## **Section 2 Responsibilities for the AYE**

**Within the arrangements for the AYE there are responsibilities for the NISCC, the employer, and the AYE registrant.**

### **Responsibilities of the NISCC**

The role of the NISCC is to ensure that all those admitted to the social care Register are fit and competent to be on the Register, and that they meet the requirements to maintain registration. New social work graduates will be placed on the social work part of the Register and the NISCC will place a condition of successful completion of the “Assessed Year in Employment”. This condition is effective for one year and allows for an extension.

This year is intended to ensure that new registrants have made the transition from student to employee and have demonstrated sustained, continuous, effective competence in the workplace. The NISCC needs to be satisfied that at the end of the year the registrant is fit to practise as a fully accountable social worker.

The NISCC will work with employers and registrants to enable the arrangements for this year to be implemented as smoothly as possible, for example, by providing appropriate pro formas. (see Section 4)

Employers will require social workers to be registered before taking up post. Arrangements will be put in place to expedite these applications to avoid delays in commencing employment.

### **Responsibilities of Employers**

The responsibilities of employers are set out in the DHSSPS Circular HSS (SSI) AYE 1/ 2005. Employers also have responsibilities to meet the NISCC Code of Practice for Employers. Code 3 states that:

“ as a social care employer, you must provide training and development opportunities to enable social care workers to strengthen and develop their knowledge and skills.”

This includes:

- Providing induction, training and development opportunities to help social care workers do their jobs effectively and prepare for new and changing roles and responsibilities (code 3.1).
- Supporting staff in posts subject to registration to meet the NISCC’s eligibility criteria for registration and its requirement for continuing professional development (code 3.3)

Employers also have responsibilities for staff under employment and equality legislation. AYE registrants should be supervised and appraised within employers’ existing systems for the management of staff performance.

## **What employers should provide for staff undertaking the AYE**

It is expected that employers will provide:

- Allocation of work, appropriate to the post, that will enable the employee to demonstrate their competence in the six key social work roles.
- A formal induction programme.
- A managed caseload<sup>2</sup>.
- Information about the standards of practice the employee is expected to meet and how performance will be appraised.
- Opportunities to meet identified training and development needs.
- Supervision, support and appraisal, including professional supervision from a Registered Social Worker.
- Timely, behaviour related, feedback on performance.

## **Change of employer within the AYE**

Staff may change employer within the timescale of the AYE. It is the responsibility of employers to provide staff with a reference. In the context of the AYE this should include sufficient information to assist the new employer in assessing the development required for the new employee to successfully complete the AYE taking into account the number of days in social work practice already undertaken.

The NISCC has developed a pro-forma, which employers may use to supplement a reference in these circumstances. (see Form AYE 4 in Section 4)

The policy regarding the AYE applies to all graduates from the Degree in Social Work who have been in employment less than a year, regardless of where they graduated or have been employed. Employers should, therefore take account of the experience to date and development needs of all new employees required to undertake the AYE.

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<sup>2</sup> Managed caseload means “a caseload commensurate with the knowledge, skills and experience of the new social work graduate and in line with the organisation’s policies for staff in the probationary period”

## Confirmation of competence

The NISCC has provided a pro forma (see Section 4) to be completed by the employer. The employer is asked to confirm one of the following:

- (a) The employee has successfully completed the AYE, or
- (b) The employee has not successfully completed the AYE and should be removed from the social work Register.

(See also arrangements for extension of the AYE on page 8)

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

and be endorsed by the registrant's current employer.<sup>1</sup>

It is the registrant's responsibility to return the form to the NISCC, but employers should take account of the DHSSPS Circular (paragraphs 14 and 15) in expediting confirmation to the NISCC.

## Responsibilities of AYE Registrants

When social work students complete the degree in social work their registration with the NISCC is terminated. There is an expectation that new social work graduates will:

- Apply to the NISCC for registration in the part of the Register reserved for social workers.
- Obtain employment in a social work agency that will provide the opportunity to practice the six key social work roles.
- Comply with and uphold the NISCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.
- Give their employer their student transcript and personal learning plan so that their learning in employment can link with their learning as a student.
- Take responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge and skills and recording any professional development activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "employer" in this context means the senior representative who has responsibility for the social work function i.e. the Director of Social Work or equivalent.

- Be accountable for the quality of their work and meet relevant standards of practice.
- Return the signed and endorsed NISCC pro forma confirming successful completion of the AYE, or apply for an extension.

**It is the registrant's responsibility to return the pro forma to the NISCC. Failure to do so will lead to removal from the Register.**

**What registrants should expect from their employer during the AYE.**

- Allocation of work that will enable them to cover the six key roles appropriate to their post.
- A formal induction programme.
- A managed caseload.
- Information from the employer about the standards of practice they are expected to meet and how their performance will be appraised.
- Opportunities to meet identified training and development needs.
- Access to supervision, support and appraisal, including professional supervision from a Registered Social Worker.
- Timely, behaviour related, feedback on performance.

## Section 3 NISCC Requirements

### Application for Registration

1. A student's registration with the NISCC is terminated on completion of the degree in social work. (Rule 6)
2. A social work graduate wishing to enter employment should make a new application to the NISCC for registration in the part of the Register reserved for social workers. (Rule 7.1)
3. A social work graduate who does not wish to enter employment immediately should not apply for registration until they are ready to enter the social work workforce.

### Completion of the AYE

The registrant must return the pro forma confirming completion of the AYE and any information regarding change of circumstances, by the due date. The NISCC will remove the condition of the AYE and will renew registration for a further three years.

### Extension of the AYE

1. The NISCC will consider an application from a registrant for an extension to the AYE where:
  - (a) the number of working days specified in the DHSSPS Circular have not been met for justifiable reasons including part-time working, or
  - (b) there are compelling personal or health reasons, including maternity leave, for an extension.Any application for an extension under these circumstances should be accompanied by an employer endorsement<sup>1</sup>.
2. Where a registrant has been unable to demonstrate the required level of competence for other reasons, an extension may be requested. This should be accompanied by an employer endorsement<sup>1</sup> and a report from the line manager or, where necessary, the supervising registered social worker, stating the gaps in performance competence and a time limited plan to achieve the necessary competence. A pro forma for this purpose is included in Section 4.

## **Non Completion**

1. Where a registrant fails to complete successfully the AYE that person will be referred to the Registration Committee with a recommendation that the registrant's entry in the Register is removed from that part of the Register.
2. If the person wishes to repeat the AYE, possibly with a different employer, the NISCC (Registration) Rules 11 and 12 will apply.
3. If the registrant fails to inform the NISCC of the completion of the AYE by the due date, the NISCC will refer the registrant to the Registration Committee with the recommendation to remove that person from the social work part of the Register.



## **Section 4 Proformas**

**This section contains forms which should be used when contacting the NISCC to advise of either completion of the AYE, or to request an extension to an AYE.**

### **Certificate of Completion**

(Form reference AYE1)

It is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure this form is completed and returned to the NISCC 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 NISCC 'Application for Extension' proforma.

### **Application for an Extension to the AYE**

(Form reference AYE2)

This form should be completed and returned to the NISCC 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 should 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 Within the AYE**

(Form reference 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.



# 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 NISCC 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 NISCC 'Application for Extension' (form reference AYE2).

**Registrant name as appears on NISCC Register:**

.....

**Registration number:** .....

**Employing organisation:** .....

.....

**Workplace address:** .....

.....

.....**Postcode:** .....

**Line Manager/Supervising social worker name as appears on NISCC Register**  
(please underline applicable designation):

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**Line Manager/Supervising social worker Registration number:**

.....

**Date Registrant commenced the AYE:** .....

**Date Registrant completed the 198 days:** .....

**Please select one of the following options** (delete the option not applicable)

**(i) The registrant has successfully completed the AYE**

**(ii) The registrant has not successfully completed the AYE**

**Registrant signature:**

..... **Date:** .....

**Line manager/Supervising social worker signature:**

..... **Date:** .....

**Director of Social Work signature** (or equivalent):

..... **Date:** .....

**Employer's official stamp or seal:**

# Application for an Extension to the AYE

(Form Ref AYE2)

This form should be completed and returned to the NISCC as soon as it is apparent that an extension will be required.

**Registrant name as appears on NISCC Register:**

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**Registration number:** .....

**Employing organisation:** .....

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**Workplace address:** .....

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.....**Postcode:** .....

**Line Manager/Supervising social worker name as appears on NISCC Register**  
(please underline applicable designation):

.....

**Line Manager/Supervising social worker Registration number:**

.....

**Date Registrant commenced the AYE:** .....

**Expected date of completion of the 198 days (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<sup>3</sup>** (Tick as appropriate)

**Note:** Where option (iii) applies, a Line Manager/Supervising Social Worker Report must accompany this form. Use form reference AYE3- V1- 2005.

(i) Working arrangements justify an extension e.g. part-time working

(ii) Personal or health reasons

(iii) Other reasons

**Registrant signature:**

..... **Date:** .....

**Line manager/Supervising social worker signature:**

..... **Date:** .....

**Director of Social Work signature** (or equivalent):

..... **Date:** .....

**Employer's official stamp or seal:**

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to AYE Guidance for further information on justifiable reasons





**Attachment to Reference – for Staff Changing Employer  
Within the AYE**

(Form reference 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.

**Registrant name as appears on NISCC Register:**

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**Registration number:** .....

**Employing organisation:** .....

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**Date Registrant commenced employment with this employer:**

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**Registrant’s experience to date:** .....

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(Form Ref AYE4)

**Gaps in Registrant's experience (related to the six key social work roles):**

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**Training/development activities since appointment with this employer:**

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**Training/development needs identified:.....**

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**Employer Signature:** .....

**Designation:**.....