

# NQSW Supported Year in Falkirk

## Guidance for Supervisors and Staff



This document should provide an overview of the Supported Year process in Falkirk. If there's any further information you wish to discuss, or need accessible versions of these materials, please contact the Social Work Workforce Development Team via [socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk) and we'll do our best.



As of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024, the SSSC's Continuous Professional Learning requirements changed. For some of our NQSWs this meant that they no longer completed the Record of Achievement under the PRTL framework and now moved over to the Supported Year framework. For all NQSWs who have registered from October 2024 onwards they will be on the Supported Year framework.

If a NQSW needs support to Register as a Social Worker with the SSSC they should see the Applying for Registration with the SSSC guidance on the [Recruitment, Induction and Retention](#) section of the Practitioner's Pages.

Please access the [Implementation](#) section of the SSSCs NQSW Website for the original templates for each NQSWs portfolio, and the [Employers](#) section for more guidance on what is asked to be put in place for NQSWs.

# Employer Supports

The SSSC have outlined the following conditions that need to be made available to support NQSWs to have the best start to their career available. These Employer Supports are essential, and further guidance can be available on the [Employer's section of the SSSCs Website](#).



NQSWs in Falkirk Council will be line managed by a Supervisor who would either be their Assistant Team Manager or their Team Manager. NQSW and Supervisors should plan out the following from the outset of the Supported Year:

## Induction

NQSWs will be offered an Induction that should reflect their needs, capabilities and strengths. There is a 2-week induction timetable included within the [Pre-Employment Checklist and Induction Template](#) and Supervisors should also consider arranging Shadowing opportunities with the Initial Response Team and other services to develop understanding. A Shadowing Request Form is found in the [Recruitment, Induction and Retention](#) section of Practitioner's Pages.

All NQSWs should have their own copy of the [Induction Planning and Tracking Record](#) and works through this alongside their Supported Year.

## Professional Development

All NQSWs will be offered three separate developmental meetings throughout their Supported Year with their Supervisor. These will be held at the beginning, middle and end of the Supported Year, and can be extended out for NQSWs on part time contracts. These meetings are the Initial Development

Discussion, Mid-Point Development Discussion & End of Year Development Discussion. Please ensure these dates are populated in your diaries.

It is essential that feedback is gathered from colleagues and people accessing support from your service, and this is included within the Self-Assessment and the Supervisor's Feedback sections.

## **Supervision**

NQSWs will have professional Supervision with their Supervisor every 4 weeks (monthly). This may include Ad Hoc and Group Supervision arrangements.

Supervisors and NQSWs need to use the Individual Development Plan to plan out and record how Protected Learning Time will be used.

## **Continuous Professional Learning**

All NQSWs need to familiarise themselves with the Mandatory Learning Activities and begin recording their progress as they engage with their Continuous Professional Learning.

There is no set way to record your Mandatory Learning Activities. It is only asked that NQSWs ensure that their work can be accessed by their Supervisor and Workforce Development for sampling and these will be stored in the NQSWs own private Teams Channel. The SSSC may ask for evidence of some, all, or none of the Mandatory Learning Activities.

## **Protected Caseload**

All NQSWs should have a caseload that reflects their development, capabilities and development plan. There is no set number of cases for each NQSW but it is agreed across services that caseloads should start small then develop in complexity and volume as they become more familiar with their service and responsibilities.

## **Protected Learning Time**

All NQSWs should have Protected Learning Time ringfenced within their working week. NQSWs are offered one half-day per week but some teams have agreed a full day per fortnight. These cannot be "banked" and there should be recognition that NQSWs will also manage their professional registration outside of their contracted hours with Falkirk Council.

Protected Learning Time should take place within your workplace and NQSWs and Supervisors should plan out how this time will be spent and agree actions on the Individual Development Plan.

## **Peer Support and Mentoring**

NQSWs should be matched with an Advanced Practitioner in their service to mentor them and help them get familiar with working for Falkirk Council, demonstrating best Social Work practice.

NQSWs are invited to the NQSW Peer Learning Forum which is held monthly. Please check the NQSW Calendar for dates, times and locations.

NQSWs should be encouraged to network and build relationships within and outside of their service. Peer to peer learning is a valuable way to share in professional growth and work out how to get things right for you in Falkirk.

# NQSWs Joining Falkirk Council



## Post Appointed

NQSWs will update their registration with the SSSC via their MySSSC Portal from *Social Work Student* to *Social Worker*. There is guidance on [Applying for Registration with the SSSC](#) on the Practitioner's Pages. Their Supported Year starts from the date the SSSC updates their registration and lasts for one calendar year.

NQSWs will share their Individual Learning Plan to the Team Manager and/or Supervisor. These are produced at University and if the NQSW does not have one they should prepare one before beginning their post or shortly after.

Team Manager and/or Supervisor will set up a Private Teams Channel with the NQSW for their Supported Year. This is where all documents should be centralised. **It is essential that Team Managers have oversight of the NQSW and supervisor's progress through the Supported Year.**

An Advanced Practitioner will be identified to be Mentor to the NQSW. Advanced Practitioners have a specific mentoring role to share and demonstrate good practice.

Hiring managers can access the [Pre-Employment Checklist and Induction Template](#) to ensure they have an ID badge, necessary equipment and systems access etc. There is also links to the Induction Planning and Tracking Record in this document, and a 2-week induction plan that can be tailored to suit the NQSW.



## Establishing the Supported Year

It is essential that both NQSW and Supervisors take time to review the Supported Year paperwork to ensure it is completed to a good standard.

The first Supervision should negotiate a plan for the upcoming Supervisions throughout the Supported Year and the NQSW will record this plan in their Portfolio. **Supervisions should be planned in each other's diaries** at a minimum of 4-weekly. These are usually more frequent at the beginning of the NQSWs employment.

Supervisors and NQSWs should also **populate their diaries with the Initial, Mid-Point and End of Year Development Discussions**. These meetings are a core part of the process for supporting professional growth and development and will be recorded in the Portfolios.

Supervisors will oversee the NQSWs Protected Caseload through their Supported Year. There is no set number to these but it is important that there is discussion and planning around the NQSWs casework to gradually increase in volume and complexity.

Supervisors will plan out Protected Learning Time of one half-day per week during the Supported Year. These will be planned and used towards professional growth and learning, and to make progress through the Supported Year Portfolios and their Mandatory Learning Activities. NQSWs should be

office-based and may wish to coordinate this time with other NQSWs. This will also be used to attend the monthly NQSW Forums. Protected Learning Time is not accumulated so cannot be “banked” and used another time, and service delivery might mean that this is moved to suit the needs of the service. NQSWs should be clear that they will also work on their Portfolios outwith their working hours.

Individual Development Plans will be used in every Supervision to plan out the NQSWs Protected Learning Time and any learning and training needs. NQSWs should also use this document to plan out when and how they will meet their Mandatory Learning Activities.



## Initial Development Discussion

**Timescale:** 6 weeks

The NQSW is required to write a self-reflection on their progress towards the Core Learning Elements. These need to highlight examples from their practice and should reflect the strengths and areas for development. These should be sent to the Supervisor prior to the Initial Development Discussion.

Supervisors will produce Supervisor’s Feedback to highlight the NQSWs professional growth needs and how you will work in partnership to achieve these throughout the Supported Year.

Feedback should be sought from the outset of the Supported Year to aid professional growth and these should be captured in the NQSWs self-assessment and/or the Supervisor’s feedback sections. At least one piece of feedback should be gathered from a person, their carer or family who are accessing support from your service, and at least one piece of feedback should be gathered from a colleague or professional.

The Initial Development Discussion should be updated following the meeting and the Team Manager should be notified so they have oversight of this on the NQSWs Private Teams Channel. **Team Managers have overall responsibility for the Supported Year** and will need to ensure there is enough quality and evidence to support the NQSWs Portfolio.

NQSW and Supervisor will continue with Supervisions, making use of the Individual Development Plan and progressing through the Induction Planning and Tracking Record until the Mid-Point Development Discussion. **It is important that Supervisors regularly check the progress of the NQSW through their Mandatory Learning Activities.**



## Midpoint Development Discussion

**Timescale:** 6 Months (9 months for part time staff)

As before, NQSWs will complete the self-reflection section of their Portfolio before their Mid-Point Development Discussion and share this to their Supervisor in advanced.

Supervisors will produce Supervisor’s Feedback to highlight the NQSWs professional growth needs and what they would like to continue to develop. Supervisors need to give developmental feedback

which highlights shared goals on what they want to achieve and how they will work in partnership to achieve these.

At least two different sources of feedback should be gathered from people accessing the service, their families or carers. And at least two different sources of professional feedback should be gathered from colleagues and wider professional networks. These should be captured in the NQSWs self-assessment and/or the Supervisor's feedback sections.

The Mid-Point Development Discussion should be updated following the meeting and the Team Manager should be notified so they have oversight of this on the NQSWs Private Teams Channel.

**Team Managers have overall responsibility for the Supported Year** and will need to ensure there is enough quality and evidence to support the NQSWs Portfolio.

NQSW and Supervisor will continue with Supervisions, making use of the Individual Development Plan and progressing through the Induction Planning and Tracking Record until the End of Year Development Discussion. **It is important that Supervisors regularly check the progress of the NQSW through their Mandatory Learning Activities.**



## End of Year Development Discussion

**Timescale:** 12 months (18 months for part time staff)

For their final Development Discussion, NQSWs will complete a final self-reflection section of their Portfolio reflecting on how they have progressed through their Supported Year, and will share this to their Supervisor in advanced.

Supervisors will produce Supervisor's Feedback to highlight the NQSWs professional growth achieved and what they would like to continue to develop as they move on to the Good Conversations framework.

At least two different sources of feedback should be gathered from people accessing the service, their families or carers. And at least two different sources of professional feedback should be gathered from colleagues and wider professional networks. These should be captured in the NQSWs self-assessment and/or the Supervisor's feedback sections.

The Mid-Point Development Discussion should be updated following the meeting and the Team Manager should be notified so they have oversight of this on the NQSWs Private Teams Channel.

**Team Managers have overall responsibility for the Supported Year** and will need to ensure there is enough quality and evidence to support the NQSWs Portfolio.

NQSWs will have a further 2 months from the end of their Supported Year to conclude their Portfolios. One month should be afforded to the Supervisor to Validate the Portfolio, and **one month to Workforce Development for Endorsement.**

NQSWs will then move to the Good Conversations framework. More information is available on the Practitioner's Pages.



## Extension Requests

NQSWs may have absence (illness, bereavement, caring responsibilities etc.) during their Supported Year and should arrange Extensions with their Supervisor as needed. NQSWs should not expect Protected Learning time or Protected Caseloads to be included in their Extensions.

NQSWs must update their Team Manager, Supervisor and Workforce Development ([socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk)) if an Extension is granted so this can be updated as part of the Validation and Endorsement.

Please remember that Endorsement needs **one month** and should be accounted for as part of the extension request.

NQSWs can do this by completing an Extension Request Form and submitting to [Registration@sssc.uk.com](mailto:Registration@sssc.uk.com).

## Portfolio Submission

SSSC will agree a final Portfolio submission date with the NQSW, and if there are any extensions these would not automatically be shared with Supervisors or Workforce Development so it is very important that updates on extensions are shared as soon as possible.

NQSWs should confirm that their Portfolio is available to Validate shortly after the end of their Supported Year by their Supervisor. It is important that Supervisors review Portfolios to ensure they have sufficient quality and evidence to support the NQSWs continued registration as a Social Worker.

It is possible that the NQSW will need to make changes or add further evidence to their Portfolios. NQSWs should ensure that their Supervisor has enough time to give this feedback and that they have enough time to update Portfolios as needed.

Supervisors should complete their section of the Validation and Endorsement Form before confirming that the portfolio has been Validated. The NQSW is then ready to submit their Portfolio to Workforce Development for Endorsement.

Completed Portfolios should be sent to Workforce Development ([socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:socialservices.training@falkirk.gov.uk)) and Service Manager Evelyn Kennedy will arrange for the Portfolio to be sampled and Endorsed.

Sampling may highlight areas of the portfolio that would benefit from further evidence and it is important that the NQSW ensures there is sufficient time for this. **Portfolios should be sent to Workforce Development one month before they are due for submission.**

Once the Portfolio has been Endorsed, the Validation and Endorsement Form will be updated and shared back to the NQSW who can then upload their completed Portfolios to their MySSSC account.

The SSSC will confirm receipt of the Portfolio and will give a timescale for when an outcome should be confirmed.



## **Change of Employer or Supervisor**

If there is a Change in Employment or Supervisor the NQSW should ensure they complete the Change of Employment or Supervisor Form from the SSSC's website.

NQSWs are responsible for updating this form and should share this to their Team Manager as soon as possible. Team Managers have overall responsibility for ensuring the NQSW has the appropriate infrastructure in place (Supervisor, Mentor etc.) and will need to ensure that the Supported Year is able to continue as planned with minimal interruptions.

## **After the Supported Year**

Once NQSWs have concluded their Supported Year they will move on to Falkirk Council's annual Good Conversations framework and 6-month review.



# Core Learning Elements









Throughout the NQSWs Supported Year they will make evidence of their progress towards the **Core Learning Elements** (right).

The Core Learning Elements have been broken down into key themes that contribute to competent and confident Social Work practice. Within the Core Learning Elements there are Mandatory Learning Activities that NQSWs must complete that generate evidence of their progress.

It is really important that NQSWs are familiar with their **Mandatory Learning Activities** (below) from the outset of their Supported Year so please take time to read over them.

Supervisors will help NQSWs plan out their learning using the Individual Development Plan.



Core learning elements								
	<div>01</div> <div></div> <div>Ethics, values and rights-based practice</div>	<div>02</div> <div></div> <div>Communication, engagement and relationship-based professional practice</div>	<div>03</div> <div></div> <div>Critical thinking, professional judgement, and decision making</div>	<div>04</div> <div></div> <div>Promoting wellbeing, support, and protection</div>	<div>05</div> <div></div> <div>Working with complexity in unpredictable and ambiguous contexts</div>	<div>06</div> <div></div> <div>Use of knowledge, research, and evidence in practice</div>	<div>07</div> <div></div> <div>Self-awareness and reflexivity</div>	<div>08</div> <div></div> <div>Professional leadership</div>
Mandatory learning activity	Intersectionality and anti-discriminatory practice	Trauma-informed practice	Critical thinking and analysis	Child protection	Working with risk	Using evidence to inform practice	Resilience and wellbeing	Professional identity
	Rights based practice	Communication, engagement, and empowerment	Decision making	Adult support and protection	Working with conflict	Applying knowledge of approaches and interventions	Critical reflection and reflexivity	Leadership
	Applying knowledge of social inequality and systemic oppression	Relationship-based practice			Professional curiosity and challenge			

All NQSWs must keep a record of their progress through the Supported Year that is accessible to them and their Supervisor. A private Teams Channel will be created where the NQSW, their managers and Workforce Development can access to give advice, sample and provide support.

## Useful Tools

Both the Mandatory Learning Activities Workbook & Supported Year Evidence Tool are available on the Practitioner's Pages.

**Advice on completing Mandatory Learning Activities:**

**Do not leave them until the end** - plan these out with your Supervisor using your Individual Development Plan.

**Give examples from your Social Work practice** and reflect on what worked well and what you might try differently.

# How should your Portfolio look?



All NQSWs will produce a Portfolio of their evidence towards the Supported Year and this will be Validated and Endorsed before it is submitted to the SSSC. On the Practitioner's Pages there are exemplars of the following:

**CPL Review Template** which includes the Initial Development Discussion, the Mid-Point Development Discussion, and the End-of-Year Development Discussion.

**Feedback from Professionals and People using services, their family and carers** captured throughout the Supported Year. There should be a minimum of 5 pieces of feedback from professionals and 5 pieces of feedback from the children, young people, adults or carers you work with.

**Individual Development Plan** which includes how the NQSW and Supervisor has planned out their Mandatory Learning Activities, Training, Shadowing etc.

**Mandatory Learning Activities** should be recorded in the NQSWs private Teams Channel so both NQSW and your Supervisor can access them and may need to be sampled by others such as Team Managers, Workforce Development or the SSSC.

# Further Guidance



## Using AI, LLM or other tools

If NQSWs plan to use any AI (Artificial Intelligence) or LLM (Large Language Model) tools to support with their Portfolios please ensure this is discussed with your Supervisor and Workforce Development. This is a very new area of Social Work and it is important that we are all clear on how and when we can use these tools in our work. Using these tools inappropriately may be a breach of your Codes of Practice so please take time to reflect and discuss.

## SSSC Guidance

Supported Year Overview: [NQSW Supported Year overview and guidance 2024 - Scottish Social Services Council](#)

Mandatory Learning Activities: [Core learning elements for social workers newly qualified social worker \(NQSW\) descriptors and mandatory learning activity - Scottish Social Services Council](#)

Employer Support: [Definitions of employer support and employers commitment to newly qualified social workers - Scottish Social Services Council](#)

## Helpful Links

SSSC Codes of Practice: [Codes of Practice | Scottish Social Services Council](#)

Practitioner's Pages: [Newly Qualified Social Worker's \(NQSW\) Supported Year in Falkirk – Forth Valley Practitioner Pages](#)

SSSC NQSWs Implementation (and original paperwork): [Implementation - SSSC NQSW website](#)

CPD Manager: [Falkirk Social Work Services CPD](#)

Olle: [Olle - Login](#)

Turas: [Turas | My Turas | Home](#)

Falkirk's Knowledge Portal: [Knowledge Portal](#)

Community Justice: [Events Calendar - Community Justice Scotland](#)