



A FORWARD THINKING OUTLOOK

Craig, Deputy Team Manager for Adoption in Wigan, was one of the first social workers in his local authority to volunteer for to take the assessment under the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS). In his blog, he reflects on the opportunities accreditation might open up to him professionally.

As a supervisor of social workers, I felt the responsibility to volunteer for something that my team members were being asked to do. I wanted to model showing initiative to others by putting my hand up and saying that I was interested. When I first heard about it, I remember thinking that this sounded like an exciting and new opportunity.

I am of the view that social work should never stand still. We are a team that encourages creative thinking and challenge and NAAS fell in line with that. Wigan, as a local authority, often volunteers to take part in innovative programmes and projects, and I think that has rubbed off on its social workers. As a forward thinking council, we tend to attract those kinds of people.

For me, it helped manage my anxieties about NAAS to think that I was helping to fine tune and calibrate the process for others. It's quite rare to be part of a programme from the planning phase and be able to give live feedback. Shaping what it might look like for others was hugely appealing.

I am someone who naturally says yes to something and I like doing things that challenge and stretch me. There can be an inertia in social work and particularly as I work in quite a specialist area, adoption, if we don't look outwards, we can miss opportunities to develop and remain on top of our practice.

On a more selfish level, I wanted to remain ahead of developments. Assuming that NAAS will be rolled out nationally, I wanted the chance to be involved in it when it was just a small group of local authorities. If I ever move on from Wigan, whatever I do in the future, I will be more employable as an accredited social worker, and a potential asset to other agencies or local authorities. You never know it might give me an edge over someone else at interview.

Whether or not to commit to NAAS has been a difficult choice for many and the unions have been an important voice, both locally and nationally. I chose to approach this from an entirely different point of view and not to make it a political decision. It was my decision to volunteer to take part. I see NAAS for the benefits and challenges that it brings and would encourage others to think for themselves about whether it is right for them.

NAAS is on balance a good thing. It is a courageous choice to decide to volunteer and go beyond the public narratives that we are hearing. I have challenged colleagues to maybe not go down the easier route and to be curious about the risks and the benefits of choosing to do the NAAS, and would encourage others reading this to do the same.