



## LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Janine, NAAS Co-ordinator and practice learning mentor in Oldham, was one of the first social workers to take the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) in her Local Authority. In her first blog, she discusses the value of setting an example to her workforce and the importance of focusing on her own development in order to help others.

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I decided to go for the NAAS coordinator role after covering a colleague's maternity leave as a practice learning mentor for newly qualified social workers (NQSWS). I felt this role mirrored my commitment to focusing on training and career progression for social workers across the service.

As the NAAS co-ordinator, I put myself forward for the first cohort as I thought I couldn't not do the assessment if I was asking others to. I believed that the best way I could support people is to go through it myself and that would give me the insight to develop a training and support programme rather than depending on other people's feedback.

### **The value of NAAS**

To be honest, if I had not been in this post, I would have done the assessment anyway. In our roles as practice learning mentors it is important to think about our own career progression and development and I wanted us to lead by example. It's been good for workers that I, and other practice learning mentors, have taken NAAS because we can talk them through the process and remind them that it is the work that we do every day.

Don't get me wrong, it was nerve-wracking! I kept thinking, 'please let me get a met' but this is only normal. I really think that if I had got a 'not met' outcome, I would have carried on redoing it until I got accredited as I do see NAAS as a development tool.

### **Development as expectation**

In Oldham, we want to align NAAS to progression and set it as an expectation. It's a way of saying, 'I am meeting those standards' so that it can be one way to help you to progress into roles which hold more responsibility, such as our Grade 8 where you have the responsibility of having a student.

From my experience, NAAS does make you look at your own practice. When I qualified, we didn't do the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) but now, people benefit from that support. I work with the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) with the NQSWs and I think they are good at recognising what we do day to day.

### **New way of learning**

In the busy world of social work, you don't often get observed by your managers/seniors, except if a case is in pre-proceedings or in the court arena, so being observed in this way and having it aligned to the KSS is positive. I do believe you should be observed in your practice and that managers should go out on visits more but they have restrictions on their time. That is where NAAS is useful.

Personally, for me courses and qualifications I've done since qualifying didn't really help my practice as much as I'd have liked and sometimes they felt quite removed from the work I was actually doing. I am more of a 'hands on' and practical person so NAAS appealed to me. For me, NAAS is very much about real life practice.

Janine has been employed as the NAAS Coordinator for Oldham Children's Social Care since May 2018. Prior to this role, she has worked as a Practice Learning Mentor for the ASYE cohort and as a social worker in the Long term locality team, Assessment Duty Team, and MASH team in Oldham since qualifying in 2010.