

## **Adult social work survey – summer 2016**

### **Summary of survey results**

#### **About the survey**

This short paper summarises the findings of an online survey conducted by Skills for Care during 25 July to 12 August 2016. The focus of the survey was on the [Assessed and Supported Year in Employment \(ASYE\)](#): assessment against the knowledge and skills statement (KSS) and professional capacity framework (PCF); the documentation; moderation; and support from Skills for Care. Other questions explored the use of action learning, the use of newly-qualified social worker (NQSW) funding and capability of assessors. The survey was distributed via email to 348 people and 135 responses were received.

#### **Key messages from the survey**

In summary, the key messages from the survey are as follows;

- 95% have embedded the revised framework (48% fully & 47% partially)
- 92% state they understand the assessment of the ASYE against the KSS and PCF (38% 'very well' and 54% 'fairly well')
- 87% have accessed funding from Skills for Care to help the process
- 58% have used action learning within the ASYE process (41% for NQSWs, 3% assessors and 14% for both)
- 96% use the record of support and progressive assessment (RSPA) and critical reflection log (CRL)
- 80% are using Skills for Care's internal moderation templates
- 25% have been asked to submit evidence to the national moderation panel and all found this to be a positive experience
- the majority feel that the ASYE has had an impact on recruitment, retention, performance management, change management and outcomes for people who receive care and support
- support from Skills for Care is valued, especially resources on the website, events and one-to-one advice and guidance.

## **Key findings:**

### **1. Understanding the assessment of the ASYE against the KSS**

A key area of focus of the work undertaken by Skills for Care during the past year has been on supporting employers to understand and feel confident in the assessment of the ASYE against the KSS. It was therefore encouraging to find that the majority of respondents (92%) reported understanding the current arrangements 'very well' (38%) or 'fairly well' (54%). This was a significant improvement from the survey undertaken in April/May 2015 when 78% of respondents reported understanding the arrangements 'very well' or 'fairly well'.

The majority of respondents (89%) are making use of networking opportunities to develop and maintain their level of understanding, although almost three-fifths (58%) are accessing relevant CPD and just under half (45%) get this support through their regular supervision sessions.

### **2. Embedding the revised ASYE (adults) framework**

In terms of how far the KSS has been embedded in the ASYE, the majority of respondents reported that it had either been 'fully embedded' (48%) or 'partially embedded' (47%).

Methods used to embed it varied, but the majority of respondents have undertaken work to review their internal processes, develop or modify guidance and related documentation in order to incorporate the KSS and contextualise it to their organisations. Most are also supporting NQSWs and assessors on an individual and group level to help them understand the KSS through one-to-one supervision and mentoring arrangements and by offering specific learning and development opportunities. A number of respondents referred to the part played by internal and external moderation in embedding the KSS within the assessment process. Others identified the importance of on-going network and information-gathering opportunities in informing their activity. It was acknowledged by one person that embedding is an on-going process of support, mentoring, and training for supervisors/assessors, other managers and NQSWs in what is expected.

It would seem that there are several things that are hindering the embedding of the KSS in the ASYE. Organisational barriers, including time constraints, capacity, restructures and organisational priorities play a significant role. Clear development needs were identified and there were several requests for further guidance. A lack of understanding about the holistic

assessment outcomes was also reported with a number of comments about them adding to confusion within the assessment process.

The majority of respondents (87%) have accessed funding from Skills for Care to help them embed the ASYE. Specific examples of the ways in which the funding is utilised focussed around the provision of training for NQSWs and assessors and the purchase of resources to support the programme. It is apparent that a significant number of organisations have used the funding to contribute to the costs of paying assessors and coordinators in various roles.

### **3. Action learning**

Three-fifths (58%) of respondents are using action learning within the ASYE process. However, a large proportion (72%) of the facilitators have not undertaken ILM accredited training in action learning facilitation.

Common themes emerging from the feedback indicate that the benefit of peer support within a safe learning environment that enables participants to share their knowledge, help each other with problem solving and ultimately help them to make improved decisions about their practice. The space and time set aside for action learning supports critical reflection, the integration of theory and practice and skill development.

### **4. The record of support and progressive assessment (RSPA) and the critical reflection log (CRL)**

The majority of respondents (96%) are using the RSPA and CRL. Respondents were asked to rate the RSPA and CRL on a scale of 1-10 in relation to user-friendliness, evidencing the assessment process, improving the quality of the assessor's assessment and improving the quality of the NQSW's critical reflection. Overall respondents rated these positively, with at least nine out of ten scoring them as 'Medium' or 'High' on the scale.

When asked how these documents could be improved suggestions included increasing their user friendliness, with a particular call for improvements regarding the formatting of the documentation. Further comments about the usefulness of the holistic assessment were also recorded. We will use these to inform reviewed assessment documentation.

## **5. Skills for Care's internal moderation templates**

Four-fifths (80%) of respondents are using Skills for Care's Internal Moderation templates. Of those not using them, some said that they planned to use them in future and others that they were using their own versions, often informed by Skills for Care's ones. However, some said that they were not aware of them, suggesting a need for further promotion of these tools. Those who had used the templates were asked to rate them on a scale of 1-10 in relation to user-friendliness, relevance in supporting improvement in practice and relevance in recording key information. Again, respondents rated these positively, with more than nine out of ten scoring them as 'Medium' or 'High' on the scale.

Most respondents were unable to suggest how the templates could be improved, but a few mentioned making them shorter / more specific and ensuring that the flow of questions makes sense and that there is no repetition. There was a request that there be a space for recording the candidates name and the date in a clear place.

## **6. The national moderation panel**

Only a quarter of respondents had been asked to submit evidence to the national moderation panel. Of these all had found the process helpful (38% 'very helpful' and 63% 'helpful'). There were no suggested improvements recorded.

## **7. Capability of assessors**

The majority of respondents (96%) said that their organisation had minimum requirements / standards for ASYE assessors and a similar number (91%) were confident in the capability of their assessors. Capability was being monitored in a variety of ways, including the internal and external moderation process, practice educator professional (PEP) and practice development educator (PDE) standards, supervision sessions and peer support sessions.

Three-quarters (73%) of respondents said that the standards were the same across their partnership but only half (50%) are planning to deliver assessor development as a partnership. Two-thirds (65%) of assessors are supported and developed via assessor forums / briefings and three in ten (31%) via development programmes linked to PEPs / PDEs.

## **8. The impact of the ASYE**

Respondents were asked about the impact they felt the ASYE had had on recruitment, retention, performance management, change management and outcomes for people who receive care and support. The results indicate that respondents felt the ASYE is having a positive impact across all of these measures.

When asked about the biggest organisational challenges envisaged in the coming 1-2 years the following were highlighted;

- embedding the KSS across the workforce – 85%
- improving the capability of assessors – 80%
- supporting leaders and managers – 76%.

## **9. Support from Skills for Care**

The impact of the support provided by Skills for Care was positive, with web resources, events and one-to-one advice and guidance scoring particularly highly.

When asked what further support could be provided by the Skills for Care area networks the majority of responses related to further advice, guidance and regular updates about developments affecting the ASYE and social work development in general. Respondents expressed appreciation for the opportunities provided by Skills for Care to network locally and nationally and it was clear that they value the role Skills for Care plays in sharing good practice, and acting as a conduit for communication between organisations and strategic decision makers. Support for assessors was highlighted as a key area where further support would be appreciated, as was assistance with moderation and feedback from the direct observations pilot project.

## **10. Final thoughts**

There were very few comments made in addition to those reported elsewhere. Some respondents took the opportunity to thank Skills for Care for the support it provides. One made the following observation:

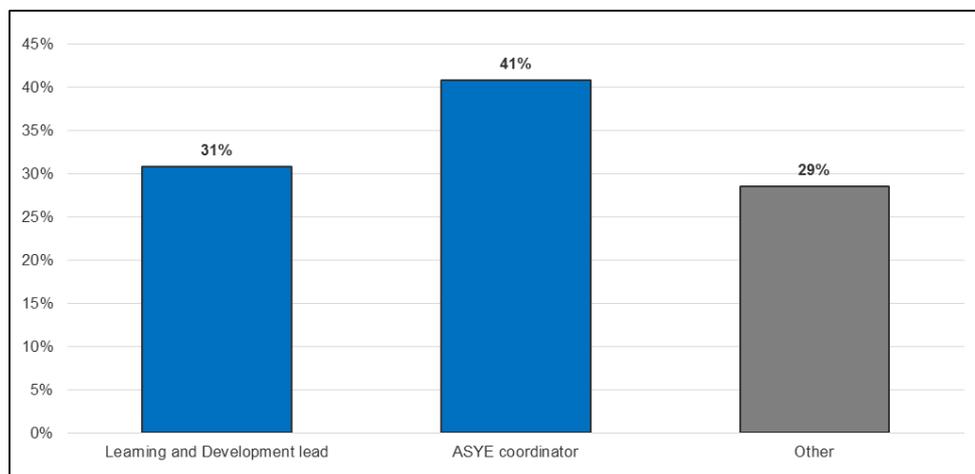
*“Urgently need a proper PQ framework for adult social workers. Assessing against KSS and PCF is too complex. Need to merge standards.”*

## Detailed findings and analysis

### About the respondents

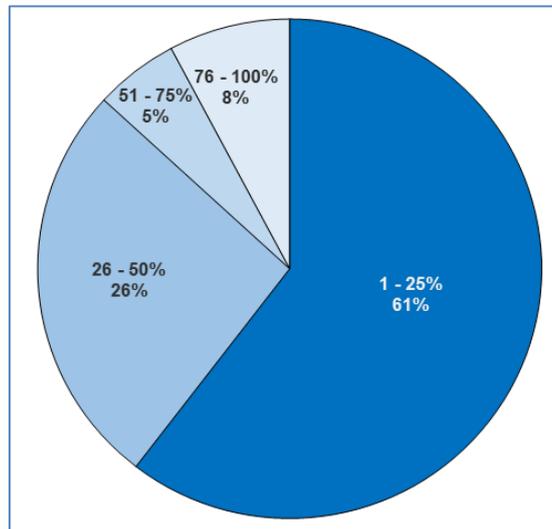
Almost three-quarters (72%) of the respondents were likely to have organisational responsibility for ASYE being either ASYE coordinators or Learning and Development leads. Three in ten (29%) respondents were managers, training staff, Principle Social Workers or Workforce Development staff which provides us with a wider perspective to the survey results [see *Chart 1*].

**Chart 1: Job role (n=130) Q4**



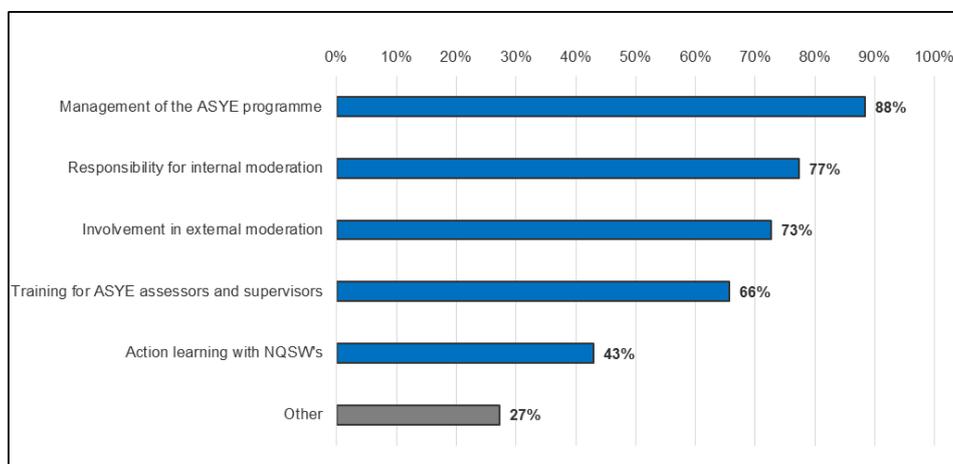
Three-fifths of the respondents (61%) spend up to a quarter of their time involved with the ASYE. A quarter (26%) spend between a quarter to a half of their time on it and 5% spend between half and three-quarters of their time on it. Almost one in ten (8%) spend more than three-quarters of their time involved with the ASYE [see *Chart 2*].

**Chart 2: Proportion of job spent on the ASYE (n=129) Q6**



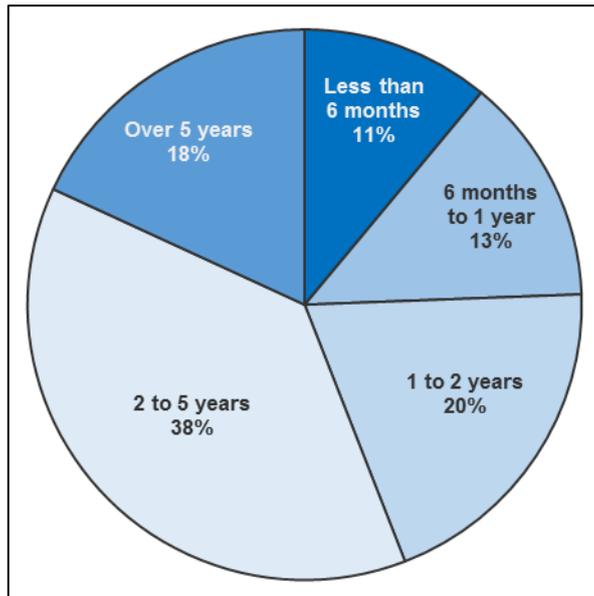
Respondents were asked to indicate whether their role with the ASYE included a number of activities. The majority (88%) said it included management of the ASYE programme and three-quarters (77%) that it included responsibility for internal moderation and also external moderation (73%). Two-thirds (66%) of respondents were responsible for training assessors and supervisors and two-fifths (43%) were involved in action learning with NQSWs. The 'other' category included mentions of developing or co-ordinating programmes and administrative tasks [see Chart 3].

**Chart 3: What the role with the ASYE incorporates (n=128) Q7**



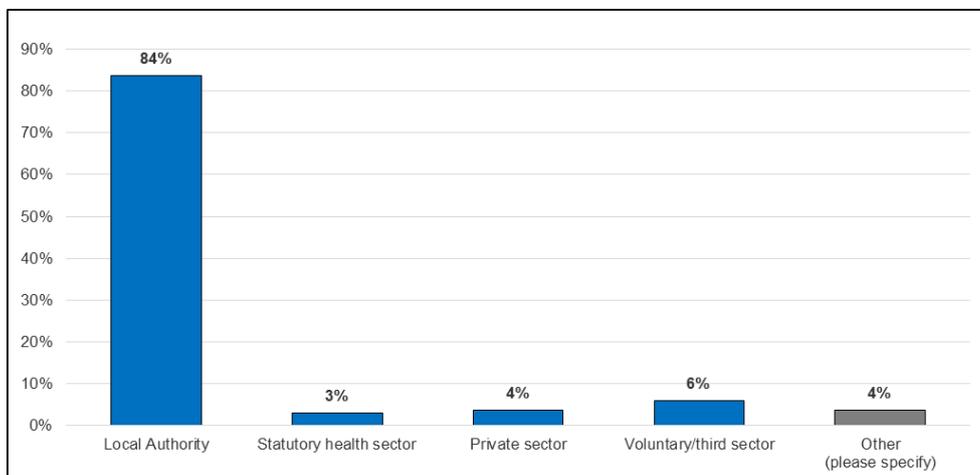
More than two-fifths (44%) of the respondents have been involved in the ASYE for less than two years. Two-fifths (38%) have been involved for between two and five years and a fifth (18%) have been involved for more than five years [see Chart 4].

**Chart 4: Length of involvement with the ASYE (n=127) Q8**



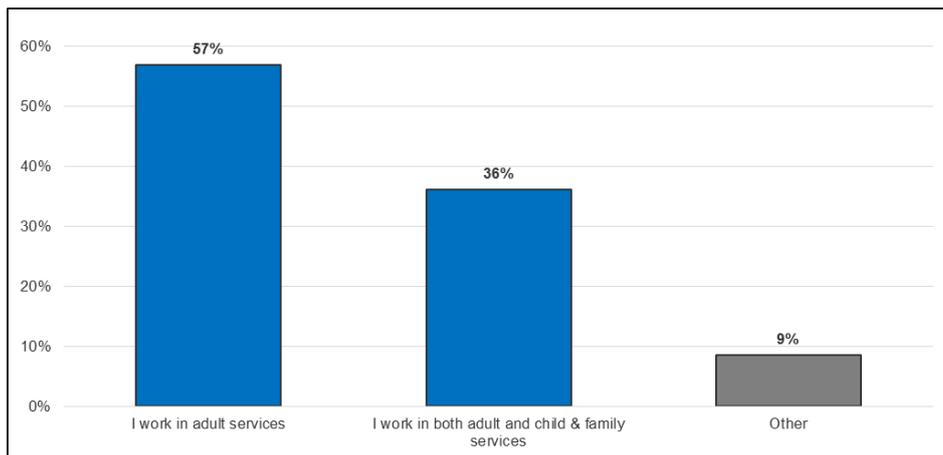
The majority of respondents (84%) work for a Local Authority, 6% work in a voluntary or third sector organisation, 4% in a private sector organisation and 3% in the statutory health sector [see Chart 5].

**Chart 5: Type of organisation (n=135) Q1**



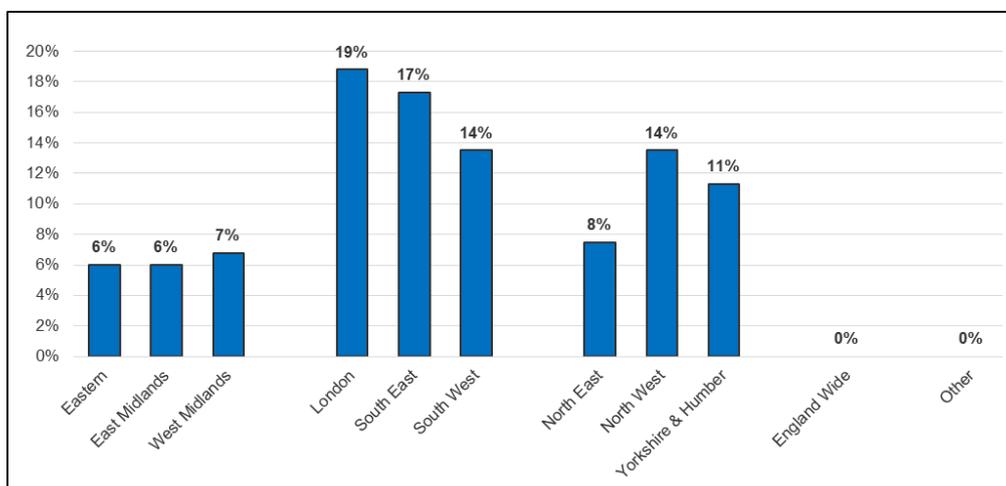
Almost three-fifths (57%) of the respondents work in adult services and just over a third (36%) work across adults and child and family services [see Chart 6].

**Chart 6: Area of work (n=130) Q5**



Half the respondents (50%) were from organisations operating in the South, a third (33%) were operating in the North and a fifth (19%) in the Midlands [see Chart 7]. This distribution is slightly different to the number of registrations made in 2015/16 which breaks down as 44% from organisations operating in the South, 34% operating in the North and 22% operating in the Midlands.

**Chart 7: Area/s of operation (n=133) Q2**

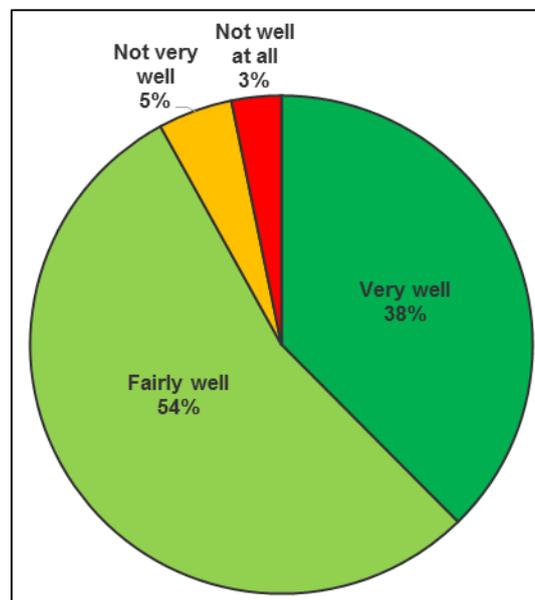


## The survey results

### *Understanding the assessment of the ASYE against the KSS*

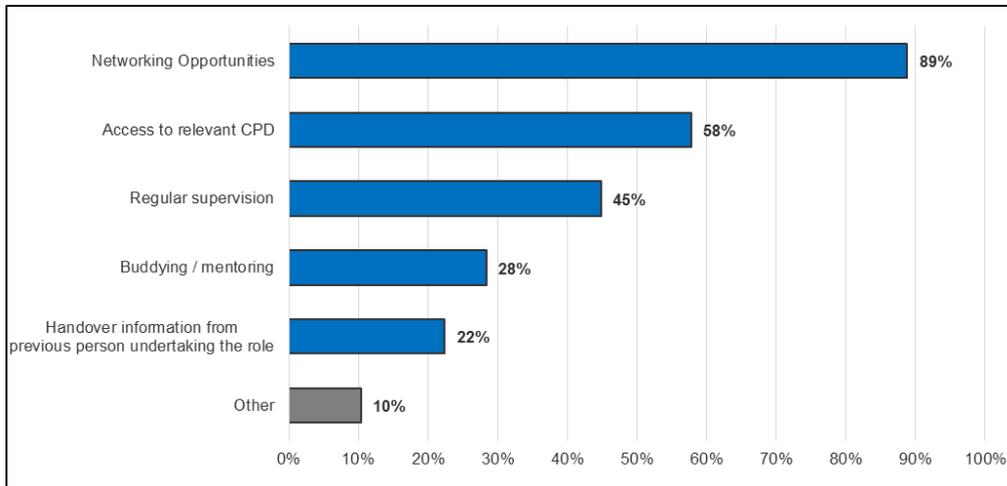
We asked a question to explore understanding of the current arrangements for the assessment of the ASYE (adults) against the KSS. Almost all (92%) of the respondents said that they understood the arrangements either 'very well' or 'fairly well' [see Chart 8].

**Chart 8: How well do you understand the current arrangements for the assessment of the ASYE (Adults) against the KSS and PCF? (n=125) Q9**



We then explored the type of support available within organisations to enable this level of understanding to be developed and maintained. Most (89%) have networking opportunities and three-fifths (58%) have access to relevant CPD opportunities. Just under half (45%) have regular supervision and just over a quarter (28%) are part of a buddying / mentoring scheme. Other things mentioned include Skills for Care resources (website, meetings) and own desk research [see Chart 9].

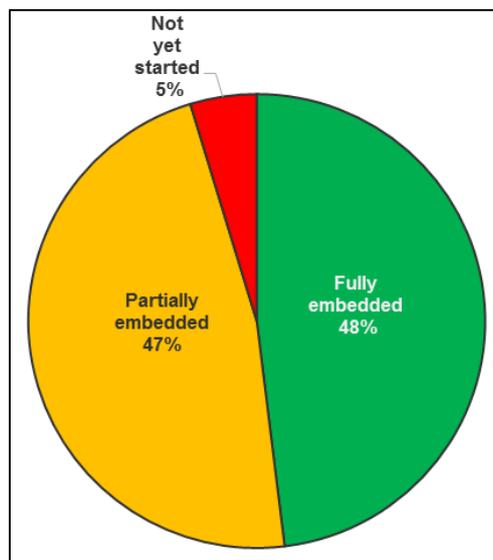
**Chart 9: Support available to develop and maintain levels of understanding about the arrangements for the ASYE (n=116) Q10**



**Embedding the revised ASYE (Adults) framework**

The majority of respondents indicated that their organisation had embarked upon the process of embedding the assessment of the KSS (child and family) in the ASYE. 95% reported that it was embedded, either ‘fully’ (48%) or ‘partially’ (47%) [see Chart 10].

**Chart 10: How far the organisation has progressed with embedding the KSS in the ASYE (n=129) Q11**



Below is a summary of the actions that have been taken to embed the assessment (based on 53 comments made): **Q12**

- The majority have undertaken work to review their internal processes, develop or modify guidance and related documentation in order to incorporate the KSS and contextualise it to their organisations.
- Support on an individual and group level has been implemented to help both NQSW and assessors understand the KSS has been provided in most cases. This has been undertaken through embedding it within one-to-one supervision and mentoring arrangements, and by offering specific learning and development opportunities.
- A number of respondents referred to the part played by internal and external moderation in embedding the KSS within the assessment process. Others identified the importance of on-going network and information-gathering opportunities in informing their activity.
- It was acknowledged by one person that embedding is an on-going process of support, mentoring, and training for supervisors/assessors, other managers and NQSWs in what is expected.

Conversely, below is a summary of the things that respondents felt had hindered the embedding of the assessment (based on 46 comments made): **Q13**

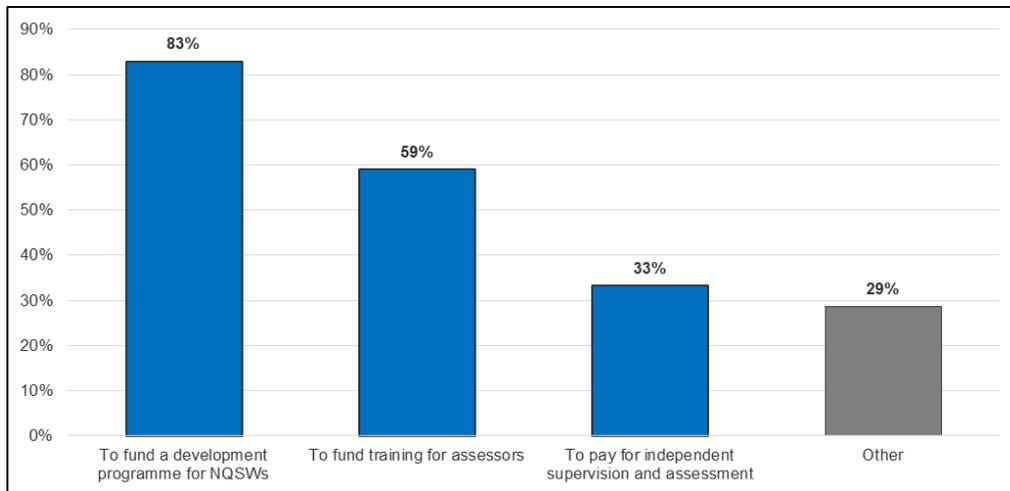
- The majority cited challenges associated with embedding the KSS alongside the PCF. Clear development needs were identified and there were several requests for further guidance.
- Organisational barriers, such as time constraints, capacity, restructures, organisational priorities, and so on were frequently mentioned.
- A lack of understanding about the holistic assessment outcomes was also reported with a number of comments about them adding to confusion within the assessment process.

Three respondents answered the question about what would help them to progress the embedding of the KSS in the ASYE. Their suggestions included networking / partnering, more templates / resources and time with a suitably qualified external person who can explain / review the paperwork. **Q14**

The majority (87%) of respondents have accessed funding from Skills for Care to help them embed the ASYE (adults). They have tended to use this funding for developing a programme for NQSWs (83%) or funding training for assessors (59%). A third (33%) have used it to pay for independent supervision and assessment. Other ways in which the funding has been used includes providing training for NQSWs and purchasing resources to support the programme. It is apparent that a significant number of organisations rely on the funding to contribute to the costs of paying assessors and coordinators in various roles [see Chart 11].

**Chart 11: In what ways has your organisation utilised the ASYE (adults) funding? (n=105)**

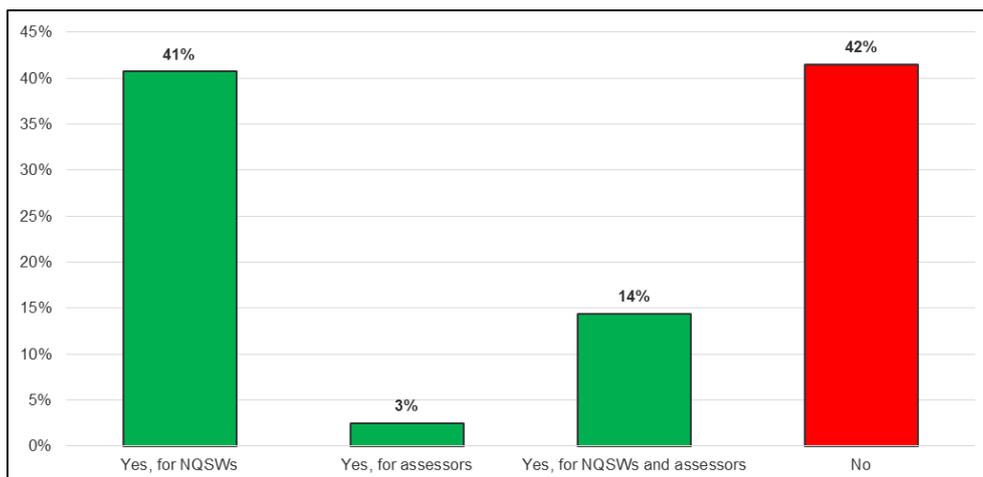
**Q16**



### **Action learning**

Three-fifths (58%) of respondents reported that their organisations are using action learning within the ASYE process: two-fifths for NQSWs, 3% for assessors and 14% for both [see Chart 12]. Only three in ten (28%) of the facilitators have undertaken ILM accredited training in action learning facilitation.

**Chart 12: Does your organisation use action learning within the ASYE process? (n=118) Q17**



Below is a summary of the benefits respondents described of taking part in action learning for those involved (based on 54 comments made); **Q19**

- peer support within a safe learning environment enable participants to share their knowledge

- helping each other with problem solving and ultimately helping them to make improved decisions about their practice
- having the space and time set aside for action learning supports critical reflection, the integration of theory and practice and skill development.

### ***The record of support and progressive assessment (RSPA) and the critical reflection log (CRL)***

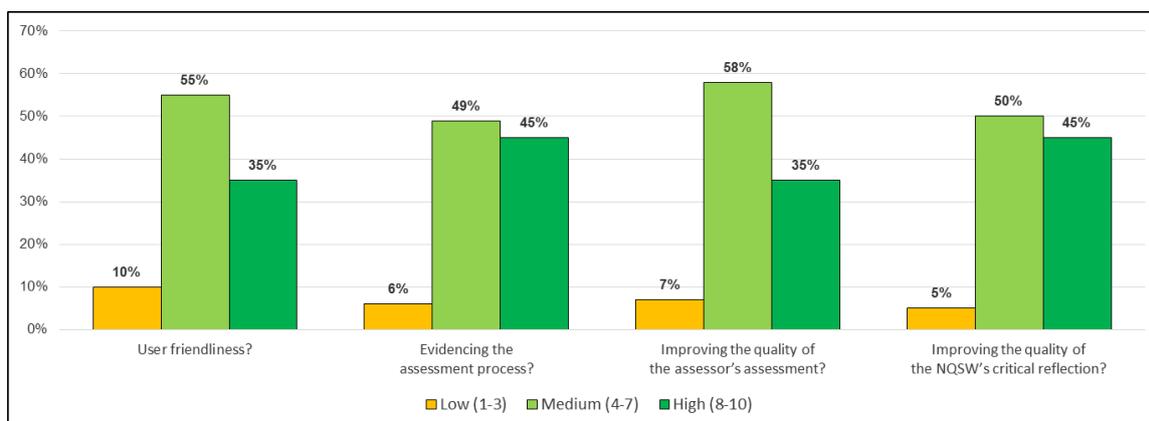
The majority (96%) of respondents reported that their organisation is using the RSPA and CRL. Of the few who were not using these, the reasons given included them not covering everything they needed or them being too complicated to use / too much work for NQSWs and assessors.

We asked respondents to rate the RSPA and CRL in terms of;

- their user friendliness
- evidencing the assessment process
- improving the quality of the assessor's assessment
- improving the quality of the NQSWs critical reflection.

Overall respondents rated the RSPA and CRL positively, with at least nine out of ten scoring each element as 'Medium' or 'High' on a scale of 1-10 [see Chart 13].

**Chart 13: Rating the RSPA and CRL in terms of... (n=110) Q22**



Respondents made some helpful suggestions as to how the RSPA and CRL could be improved (73 comments made). These mainly focussed on the user friendliness / formatting of the documents and these will inform our review of the assessment documentation. Further comments about the usefulness of the holistic assessment have also been noted for future consideration.

### **Skill for Care’s Internal Moderation templates**

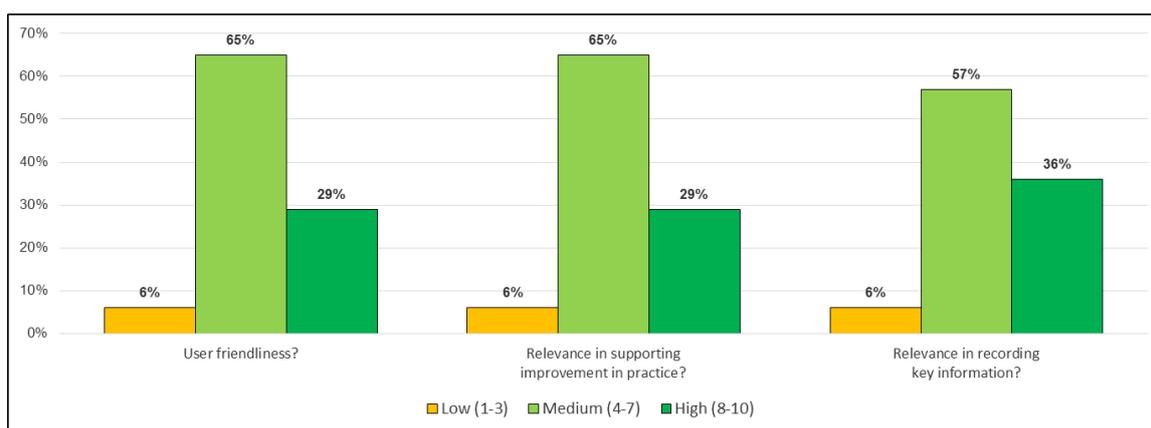
Four-fifths (80%) of respondents reported that their organisation is using Skills for Care’s templates to record the internal moderation process. Those who aren’t using them attributed this to where they are in the process (i.e. that they plan to use them when the time is right) or the fact that they have their own internal (or Partnership-based) templates already. It was suggested that consistency / standardisation across adults and child and family services would be preferable and one respondent felt they were too general to be sufficiently robust.

We asked respondents to rate our internal moderation templates in terms of;

- a) their user friendliness
- b) their relevance in supporting improvements in practice
- c) their relevance in recording key information

Overall respondents rated the templates positively, with more than nine out of ten scoring each element as ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ on a scale of 1-10 [see Chart 14].

**Chart 14: Rating of SfC’s Internal Moderation templates in terms of... (n=97) Q26**



Respondents were asked how the templates could be improved. Only 25 respondents made suggestions. These included making the form more printer friendly, wanting more headings in the comments boxes to provide more detailed feedback, ensuring that they avoided repetition and being more specific. A few people commented that all forms and feedback from the national panel need to be cross referenced and consistent. The suggestions made will inform revisions to the templates following the national moderation panel meeting in October 2016.

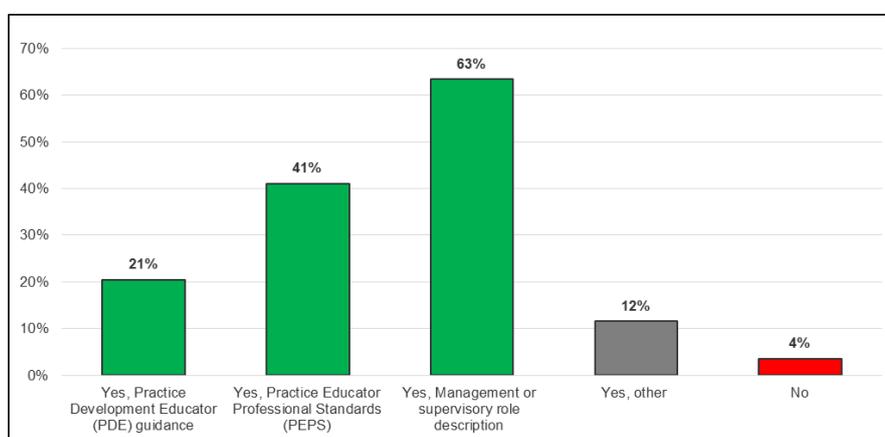
### ***The national moderation panel***

Only a quarter (25%) of respondents work for organisations that have been asked to submit evidence to the national moderation Panel. All had found this to be a positive experience with almost two-fifths (38%) describing it as ‘very helpful’. There were no suggestions for how the process could be improved.

### ***Capability of assessors***

The majority (96%) of respondents reported that their organisation had minimum requirements / standards for ASYE assessors. Two-thirds (63%) have minimum requirements for management / supervisory role descriptions whilst two-fifths (41%) have practice educator PEPs and a fifth (21%) have PDE guidance [see Chart 15].

**Chart 15: Does your organisation have minimum requirements or standards for ASYE assessors? (n=112) Q31**



Below is a summary of the ways respondents said their organisation monitors the capacity of ASYE assessors (based on 102 comments made); **Q32**

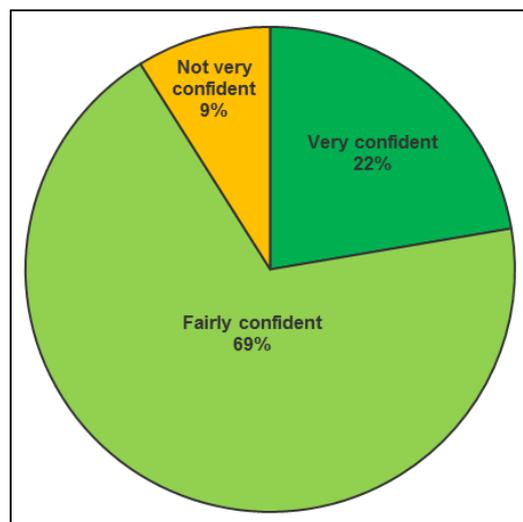
- the internal moderation process and gaining feedback on ASYE assessor reports (35 mentions)
- a ‘multi-faceted’ approach, including (in many cases) feedback from the internal moderation process (30 mentions)
- reliance on assessors meeting either PEP or PDE standards (11 mentions)

- ASYE lead attendance / overview at 3 month review sessions (11 mentions)
- supervision sessions, including one employer who conducts direct observations of supervision sessions (9 mentions)
- peer support sessions / ASYE supervisor support sessions – sometimes combined with reviewing reports and sometimes with direct feedback from NQSWs (9 mentions)
- the external moderation process (8 mentions)
- feedback from NQSWs (4 mentions)

Encouragingly, only 7 respondents said that they had no formal process of monitoring the capability of assessors.

The majority of respondents (91%) are confident in the capability of the ASYE assessors in their organisation [see Chart 16].

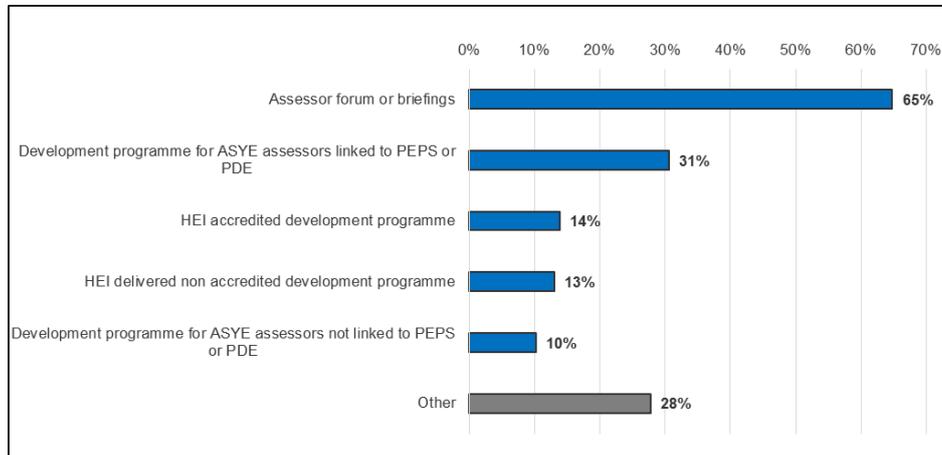
**Chart 16: Confidence in the capability of ASYE assessors in your organisation (n=112) Q33**



Three-quarters (73%) of respondents said that the same standards for ASYE assessors had been adopted by their ASYE partnership.

Two-thirds of respondents (65%) noted that assessors in their organisation were supported via forums or briefings, whilst three in ten (31%) said they had access to a development programme linked to PEPs of PDE. A quarter (27%) have access to a HEI accredited or non-accredited development programme and one in ten (10%) have access to a development programme that isn't linked to PEPs or PDE [see Chart 17].

**Chart 17: How the development of ASYE assessors is supported (n=108) Q35**



Half (50%) of respondents said that they plan and deliver assessor development as part of their ASYE partnership.

### ***The impact of the ASYE***

We asked respondents to rate the impact of the ASYE on;

- a) the recruitment of NQSWs
- b) the retention of social workers beyond their first year
- c) the management of the performance of NQSWs about whom there is a concern
- d) implementation of change (culture, workforce re-design, etc)
- e) outcomes for people who receive care and support

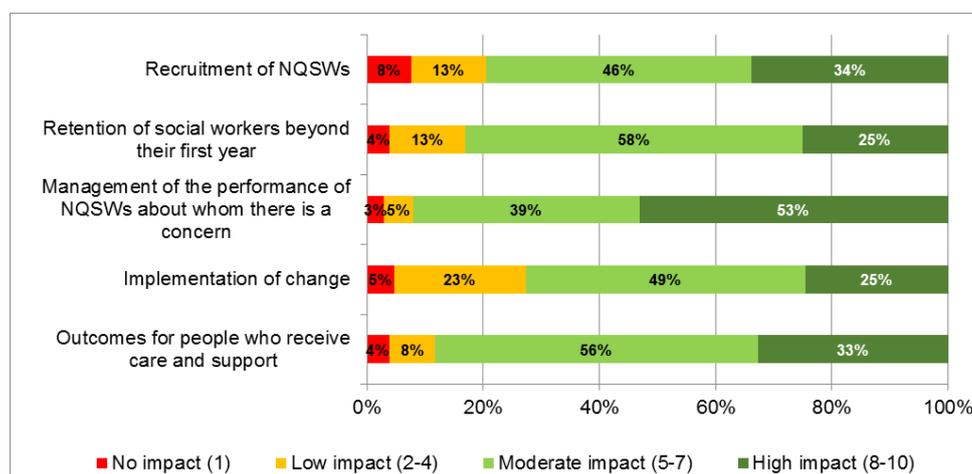
The results indicated that the majority of respondents felt the ASYE had had an impact across all measures [see Chart 18];

- 92% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on the recruitment of NQSWs, with almost half (46%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and a third (34%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].
- 96% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on the retention of social workers beyond their first year, with almost three-fifths (58%) rating the

impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and a quarter (25%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].

- 97% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on the management of the performance of NQSWs about whom there is a concern, with two-fifths (39%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and over half (53%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].
- 95% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on the implementation of change, with half (49%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and a third (33%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].
- 96% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on outcomes for people who receive care and support, with over half (56%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and a third (33%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].

**Chart 18: The impact of the ASYE (n=107) Q37**



We then asked respondents about the challenges they envisaged for their organisations over the coming 1-2 years:

- In relation to the **ASYE** the greatest challenge (mentioned by 80% of respondents) is in relation to 'improving the capability of assessors', followed by 'putting in place support arrangements for the ASYE' (56%) and 'participation in internal and external moderation' (33%).

- In relation to **CPD** the greatest challenge (mentioned by 85% of respondents) is in relation to 'embedding the KSS across the workforce', followed by 'supporting leaders and managers' (76%).
- In relation to **other areas** 74% of respondents said that 'planning and developing an integrated workforce' was a challenge for their organisation whilst 71% said that 'participation in teaching partnerships' would be challenging.

### **Support from Skills for Care**

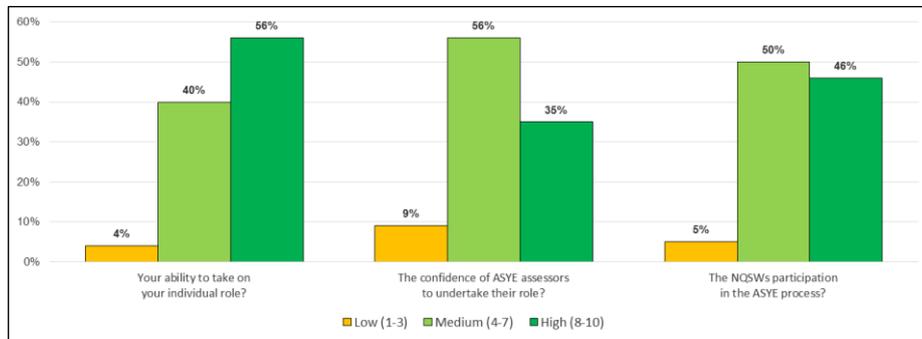
We asked respondents to rate the impact that the tools, resources and support and guidance available from Skills for Care has had on;

- a) their ability to undertake their role
- b) the confidence of ASYE assessors to undertake their role
- c) the NQSWs participation in the ASYE process

The results were fairly consistent across all three [see Chart 19];

- 96% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on their own abilities, with two-fifths (40%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and over half (56%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].
- 91% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on the confidence of ASYE assessors, with over half (56%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and a third (35%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].
- 95% of respondents acknowledged that it had had some impact [*i.e. answered 2-10*] on NQSWs participation in the ASYE process, with half (50%) rating the impact as 'moderate' [*i.e. answered 5-7*] and almost half (46%) rating the impact as 'high' [*i.e. answered 7-10*].

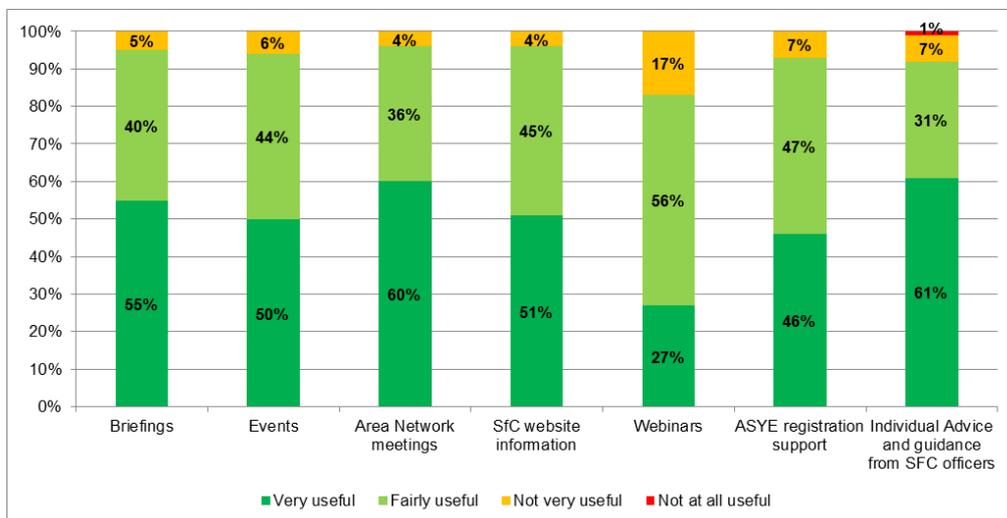
**Chart 19: Impact of SfC support on... (n=109) Q39**



We then asked how useful respondents had found various types of support on offer from Skills for Care over the past year. The majority of respondents (99%) had accessed the Skills for Care website and of these 96% rated it as 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'. Most (93%) had also accessed ASYE registration support and 93% rated this as 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'. Most (83%) respondents had also used Skills for Care briefings and the majority (95%) rated them 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'. A similar proportion had received individual advice / guidance from Skills for Care officers and 92% rated this as 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'.

Around four-fifths of respondents had attended Skills for Care events (78%) or area network meetings (78%). The majority also rated these as 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' (94% and 96% respectively). Webinars had been accessed by three in ten (29%) of respondents. Of these, four-fifths (83%) of respondents rated them as 'very useful' or 'fairly useful' [see Chart 20].

**Chart 20: Usefulness of SfC support (n=110) Q40**



We then asked how the Skills for Care area networks could support respondents to implement the new developments. 74 people answered this question. The majority requested further advice, guidance and regular updates about developments affecting the ASYE and social work development in general. Support for assessors was highlighted as a key area where further support would be appreciated, along with assistance with moderation and feedback from the direct observations pilot project.

Respondents expressed appreciation for the opportunities provided by Skills for Care to network locally and nationally. Our role in sharing good practice and acting as a conduit for communication between organisations and strategic decision makers is valued.

### ***Final thoughts***

At the end of the survey we gave respondents the opportunity to add any other comments they had on the subject. Of the eleven comments made, the majority were in thanks for the support provided by Skills for Care with a couple reiterating pleas for a joined up process and for a review of the paperwork to ensure that it functions properly as an online tool.