

How to help your staff with SSSC Open Badges

SSSC Open Badges have been very popular over the last few months with lots of social service workers visiting the website for the first time. We've produced this guidance for managers to help workers get the most from their learning activity.

Here are 10 tips for making this a success.

1. Complete these two badges first

Collecting evidence of continuous professional learning through badges can feel daunting at first and is very different to traditional online learning. Our two introductory badges are designed to help learners with this.

They are:

- [Getting started with Open Badges](#)
- [Writing evidence for Open Badge applications](#)

It's important learners start with these two badges. We have found that those who haven't completed these badges are likely to have their evidence submissions for badges returned to them for further work.

Managers can help by encouraging workers to achieve these before applying for anything else and allowing them time to do this.

2. Familiarise yourself with the badges

Managers should undertake a badge first before asking staff to complete it. This will give you an idea of what is involved, how long it will take and what support learners will require.

3. Allow them enough time

Completing a badge often involves tasks and activities which need to happen in the workplace and in the flow of normal work. Sometimes it will take several weeks for a learner to gather all the evidence they need to earn the badge.

When asking someone to undertake a badge, they will need:

- time to complete all learning materials
- time to complete all activities set by the badge criteria, some of which will need to happen in the flow of their normal work
- time for them to write or record their evidence submission
- 28 days after submission for their evidence to be assessed
- time for resubmission and a further 28 days for assessment if their first attempt at the badge is unsuccessful.

We cannot fast-track assessments to meet deadlines set by employers or training providers. We treat all submissions on a first come first served basis.

4. Facilitate discussion activities

Most badges require the learner to complete a discussion task with either their colleagues or their manager/tutor. You can help with this by allocating time in team meetings or supervision sessions.

Where a badge sets a task requiring discussion with colleagues, it can be helpful to have an experienced member of staff present to make sure learners:

- share the evidence they have produced so far
- seek and provide feedback on each other's evidence
- discuss the key points for their own practice and the service
- commit to helping each other apply what they have learned in practice and plan how to do this.

5. Check their evidence before it is submitted

Ask to see your workers' evidence before they submit it to us. The introductory badges will encourage them to do this. This gives you an opportunity to check:

- their evidence meets the badge criteria and requirements
- they have understood what they have been asked to learn about
- they have undertaken all the activities asked of them
- they have identified important learning points that fit with their own development and delivery of the service
- they have thought of and mentioned how this learning relates to the policies and procedures of your organisation
- they haven't included anything in their submission that could identify individuals – these applications will be automatically declined.

You should also note the actions they intend to take to develop their practice and follow up on this to make sure it happens.

Give feedback to the learner if you feel they need to change something or add to their evidence before submission. By doing this you will increase their likelihood of gaining the badge first time round.

6. Endorse their badges

A unique award page is generated each time a new badge is awarded to someone. This includes their name, details about the badge, a copy of the evidence they submitted and a form for others to leave an endorsement message.

Encourage your workers to share these pages with you and take a moment to leave them an endorsement.

You add value to their badge by doing this. Especially if you build a picture of how the recipient has put their learning into practice since achieving the badge and the positive difference this has made within the service. The message you leave can be published by the learner and appear on their award page alongside their other evidence for the badge.

7. Encourage informal coaching

Where a worker finds a badge challenging, buddy them up with a colleague who has already achieved the badge. Informal learning support like this can be invaluable to everyone involved and help grow capacity for self-directed learning in your service.

8. Celebrate success

Collecting badges demonstrates commitment to continuous professional development and deserves to be celebrated, especially where someone's practice improves because of their learning. Congratulate workers through meetings, workplace newsletters, social media or even arrange your own inhouse award ceremony.

9. Ask new staff about Open Badges

We know that workers in care services can move around different employers over their career. An Open Badge belongs to the learner, not their employer, so ask new staff if they already have any Open Badges and encourage them to share them with you. The evidence they submitted for their badges will help you get a picture of their prior learning.

10. Understand the limitations of badges

Badges are an excellent way for people to show their knowledge and understanding as part of their self-directed continuing professional learning. However, SSSC Open Badges are not designed to enable people to demonstrate competence. You can never rely solely on open badges where workers must have mandatory training, for example in the safe administration of medication. Badges can complement accredited training but not replace this, so make sure you provide this training in addition to workers undertaking open badges.

If an issue arises about a worker's practice, you cannot use open badges as evidence you provided the required training and learning as part of your duties as an employer.

Don't make badges compulsory

We do not recommend making badges compulsory. Workers who have deadlines set to complete our badges present with lower quality evidence of learning than those encouraged to learn at their own pace. They are highly likely to be declined badges or score a minimum pass mark. Instead of making a badge compulsory, it is better to encourage workers to start gradually and grow their confidence through the introductory badges and other badges of their choice.