



Press Release

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Social work students qualify early to join fight against Covid-19

Social work students are graduating early to help deliver health and social care services during the pandemic.

More than 20 University of Edinburgh students who are nearing the end of their education and training for practice, are opting to help the frontline fight against Covid-19.

Some 26 masters students have now officially graduated from their two-year programme, eight weeks ahead of schedule.

The newly qualified social workers will take up posts across Scotland in community, hospital, residential, and day care settings.

They will work with adults and children who are facing significant challenges in their lives, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

All students joining the accelerated process will continue to be supported by academics in Social Work from the University's School of Social and Political Science.

Each student will continue to have a personal tutor who can offer support and advice during the first months in practice.

Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh, Director of the Master of Social Work programme at the University of Edinburgh, said: "We are very proud of our final year Master of Social Work students. They are keen to make a contribution at this difficult time, and have worked really hard, in challenging circumstances, to complete their final assessments in order to demonstrate their suitability for entering practice. Their desire and willingness to support the delivery of services to the most vulnerable people in our community is to be commended."

Ajay Lakshmi, a final year student said: "Qualifying a little bit earlier than expected is daunting, especially at a time when social inequalities are widening as we speak. However, I remember feeling extremely helpless in the face of these worldwide issues; being trained for this kind of crisis management and not being able to contribute. Becoming part of this essential workforce earlier definitely puts that sense of helplessness at ease. While the COVID-19 pandemic has had an immense impact on all of us, social inequalities only elevate the adverse effects on the most vulnerable, and it is an honour to support them during these unprecedented times."

In June a further 20 students will graduate from the University's undergraduate programme into social work practice.

The scale of the Covid-19 crisis has prompted the Scottish Social Services Council to make arrangements for nine social work programmes in Scotland to release students early into the workforce.

The University of Edinburgh cohort is among the first to join the new scheme.



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The Scottish Social Services Council has issued guidance to employers about the induction and support arrangements for the social workers beginning their career in the current circumstances.

The Scottish Association of Social Workers has also developed resources for workers dealing with Covid-19.

Lorraine Gray, Chief Executive of the Scottish Social Services Council, said: “Congratulations to all of the new social work graduates. It is wonderful to see so many social work students coming forward to graduate early and join the temporary social work register to help Scotland during the pandemic. At such a challenging time, they are stepping into vital social work roles to help support our most vulnerable communities. I’m very happy to welcome the registered workforce as they take their first steps in their career.”

Iona Colvin, Chief Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government, said: “A huge congratulations to all your social work graduates. To say you are joining the workforce at a crucial time is an understatement, the way we are delivering social work in the current circumstances is quite unprecedented and brings with it enormous difficulties and challenges – but it will also bring huge reward to you as you start your social work career. I am constantly amazed at how social workers are rising to the challenges we are facing, in order to support the people in our communities who are at their most vulnerable. These are uncertain times for all of us, but never has social work been needed as much as it is now. So I wish you luck and hope you stay safe and resilient over the coming months.”

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