

Step Up to Social Work FAQs

What is Step Up to Social Work?

- Step Up to Social Work is a Department for Education (DfE) initiative to encourage people to change their career/retrain or take up a career in social work, working with children and families.
- It is a 14-15 month intensive study/placement postgraduate degree in social work programme which will enable you to apply for a job as a social worker.
- The degree programme is delivered by a University which has been contracted by the Partnership and will be delivered face to face in a central regional location or remotely.
- Cohort 8 is a new cohort, applications for which close in March 2023. Interviews will take place in June/July 2023 and this cohort will start in January 2024 and finish March 2025.

What funding is available?

- **There is a tax free bursary payment of £19,833 (£1,416 per month)** in total for the 14 months. Your course will end mid March 2025 so you may wish to spread your bursary cost over 15 months so you get your final bursary payment in March 2025 otherwise you will be left with two weeks in March where you will not receive any monies.
- **Your tuition fees will be paid by the DfE if you live in England at the time of your studies.** If you do not, then your fees will not be paid – you can still apply but would have to pay your own fees.
- Payment will be made directly into your bank account and will be **tax free**.
- Course fees will be paid directly to the University provider as the DfE are also funding your fees.
- Depending on the Local Authority you train with, this payment will be made around the 30th or 16th of the month, so you might need to change any existing direct debits to plan around this.
- Your first payment will be around 30th January and therefore you should ensure you have enough money to pay for your travel/expenses to University from early January.
- Some student's car share to save on travel expenses. You will receive a student card from the University which will allow you to apply for discounted train travel as well as many other student discounts and a reduction in council tax.
- The Yorkshire and Humber regional partnership have contracted with a University who delivers the programme online with 12 face to face teaching days. You will continue to attend University one day a week whilst you are on placement so that your learning on placement can be embedded.

- Each successful student will receive a laptop in order to be able to study remotely. This will be returned to the University at the end of the programme and you will be charged for any damage should this occur.

What qualifications do I need for Step Up to Social Work?

- As long as you have an BA **Honours** degree with either a 1st or 2:1 degree classification (level 6) or a 2:2 classification then you can apply.
- You must have copies of your certificates to bring to the assessment centre or email directly otherwise we will not be able to interview you. You will be advised nearer the time of the assessment of whether to send these online or bring them in person.
- In addition to higher education, applicants must also:
 - Have GCSEs in English Language and Maths (or equivalent) at a C grade or better
 - Have relevant experience (voluntary or paid) working with vulnerable children, young people or families for at least 6 months
 - Live in England
 - Possess the right to work and study in the UK (including access to public funds) for the duration of the programme (until March 2025)
 - Not already have a social work qualification

What are Step Up to Social Work applicants expected to know?

In addition to academic qualifications and experience, you should also make sure that you are able to demonstrate the following skills and knowledge:

- Emotional resilience, the ability to cope with and adapt to the emotional impact of helping children and young people who are often in very stressful situations
- A solid understanding of current social work theory and research
- You should be aware of the risk indicators of different types of harm in children and young people
- You need to show that you are able to think intuitively and logically to make decisions
- Good, accurate report writing is a key skill for the job
- Understand the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for child and family social workers. This is the standard of good practice used to assess applicants, so it's important to familiarise yourself.
- You should also show understanding of the entry-level Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers and be able to complete your application form with these in mind.
- You can find these statements and frameworks and more information on the [British Association of Social Work site](#)

Which authorities in Yorkshire and Humber are offering places? What happens if some authorities are full?

- Both Regional Partnerships in Yorkshire and Humber have secured a significant number of places on the next Step Up to Social Work programme.
- Sheffield City Council is the lead authority for the Yorkshire and Humberside region and supports the following authorities: Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster City Council, East Riding, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, Rotherham, York and Hull.
- Leeds City Council is the lead authority for the West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire regional partnership, supporting Leeds, Bradford, North Yorkshire, Wakefield, Calderdale and Kirklees.
- If successful, you will be offered a place in your preferred authority however if there are no places left you will be asked if you would like to be referred to another authority within your region or one outside of your region which means you would have to be willing to relocate. Any costs associated with relocation will need to come out of your bursary. We will also hold a waiting list in case people change their minds about accepting the trainee contract.

How is Step Up to Social Work different from other social work programmes?

- Step Up to Social Work is a pre-qualifying social work programme developed through a partnership between the 15 local authorities (LA) within the Yorkshire and Humberside Region and the contracted University provider. It is an intensive 14-15 month programme that starts in January and leads to a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work and will enable you to register with Social Work England. It covers the same curriculum as other pre-qualifying social work programmes but in a shorter timescale. Therefore, you can expect it to be a more intensive and an emotionally demanding learning experience.
- Students will have a trainee contract with a host Local Authority and two contrasting placements will be provided by the Local Authority with the final placement guaranteed in a statutory children and families setting.

I don't have an Honours degree but I do have another type of qualification in Health and social care, can I apply?

- In order to be eligible, you need either:
 - An honours degree qualification (such as a BA or BSC) at 2:2 or better;
- You must also have a GCSE in Maths and English grade A-C or equivalent and be able to produce the certificates at the time of applying. Should the assessment centre take place on a face-to-face basis you will be asked to bring the original certificates for these and your degree with you. Should it be virtual then you will need to upload your certificates.
- We won't be able to interview you without these certificates so don't be offended if we turn you away. You must also have at least 6 months experience of working with vulnerable children and families either in a work capacity or substantial voluntary capacity.

I can't find my English and Maths GCSE certificates, what should I do?

- You must be able to upload your certificates with your application form and produce the originals on the assessment centre day, otherwise we will not be able to interview you.
- If you cannot find your certificates, there are a number of internet sites to help you, but please bear in mind the time it takes to order new copies (4 weeks) as the closing date for applications is March 2023. Unfortunately, we are unable to process your application if you do not have these certificates.

I have a temporary student visa, can I still apply?

- Non-British EU nationals would only be eligible to apply if they have been a resident in the EU for 3 or more years unless they have the appropriate study visa. All other non-British applicants must have been granted the right to remain/work in the UK (and provide passport details for checks) or otherwise have the appropriate study visa. **This will be checked at the application form stage as settlement status rules may apply.**

What does relocation mean and will I receive additional monies?

- This means you would have to move home to be able to undertake the placements in the host authority. This can be expensive and you should work out your finances carefully before accepting an authority which means you have to temporarily relocate.
- You will not be offered any additional monies to relocate or to travel further. These additional costs must all be calculated within your bursary payment.

What is the assessment process? What does the assessment centre consist of?

- Assessment centres will take place in June or July 2023 for the Cohort of students who will start their degree in January 2024. This may take place face to face however some local authorities may wish to interview virtually.
- You should expect to attend an assessment centre for at least 4 hours.
- The written exercise will be administered by the DfE support contractor which is currently Capita. They will be in touch with you to completed your written exercise separately to the assessment centre.
- There will be a formal panel interview with a manager from your preferred authority and a university representative and this will last 30 minutes.
- There will be other tests including an interview with foster carers and young people and a role play or group exercise. Your answers will be assessed against the entry criteria of the PCF.
- All exercises will be marked against the PCF so you need to be knowledgeable and evidence your current experience around these domains. The PCF can be viewed on the www.basw.co.uk site.

Who will tell me if I have been invited to the assessment centre?

- The regional partnership lead administrator will send you a letter/email and

- If you are unable to attend on that day we may be able to change the date and inform you of the time and date of the assessment centre.
- If you change your mind and are unable to attend then we ask you to let us know at least 24 hours prior to the interview so that we can change our timetables.

I am due to have a baby in January 2024, can I still apply?

- You may apply and your host authority will make reasonable adjustments for you however you must recognise that this is a very intensive programme with only 32 days holiday throughout the 14month period. The bursary payment is not extended beyond the 14 months and placements cannot be altered or extended. You will need plenty of family support and will have to travel whilst on placement. Each placement day is 7 hours.
- If you are resigning from employment then you must think very carefully before you agree to sign a contract for this programme as you will be giving up your maternity rights under your employer's terms and conditions.

I have booked to go to a music festival in one of the placement periods, can I still go?

- Odd days can be taken whilst on placement as long as you have the permission of the team manager and course programme manager and can make the days up before the end of the placement.

I am getting married in the summer, can I still apply to do the degree programme?

- As mentioned above, this programme is highly intensive and different holidays cannot be arranged outside of the programme. You may wish to delay your application for the next cohort.

If I am offered a place but can't start in January, can I defer my place until the next cohort?

- Unfortunately, because the DfE have agreed funding for this cohort of Step Up to Social Work, but not any future cohorts as yet, you cannot defer your place, as we have no guarantee that a further Step Up programme will be funded.

How many days holiday will I have and can I take my holiday at any time?

- We have agreed to include 32 days of holiday including Bank Holidays – not all Partnerships give holidays but we want you to take care of your health and wellbeing.
- Holidays will be planned out by the University and will usually take place around Christmas, Easter, Spring Bank and the summer holidays. A calendar of holiday days will be provided well in advance of the start of the programme. No other holiday times can be taken.

Where and when is the Step Up to Social Work programme taught?

- The programme for the Leeds partnership will be taught in Leeds. The Yorkshire and Humberside partnership university provider will teach remotely but with a base in Sheffield and the Humber region. Each student will receive a laptop on loan from the university provider.
- The programme starts at the beginning of January and you may register without having to attend the University.
- You can expect to receive classroom teaching for up to 12 days during the programme period. The teaching day is 10am to 4pm. The remainder of the course is taught virtually but placements are face to face on worksites.
- A full programme and calendar of events will be given to you prior to the start of the course.

When will I be on placement?

There are two periods of assessed practice:

- The first placement will be for 70 days and the university calendar will show when this starts.
- The second and final placement will be for 100 days.
- Manchester Metropolitan University are the provider for the Yorkshire and Humber region. During the placement period you will still be expected to attend university virtually one day a week. This extends the placement period by two weeks which means you will finish your course mid March 2025.
- Your host authority will arrange these placements, and they will be in contrasting settings to give you the broadest range of experience possible.

Can I choose where I have my placement?

- You will sign a trainee contract with one of the Local Authorities within the Regional Partnership. This Local Authority will identify and provide your placements and allocate a Practice Educator to mentor you. We will guarantee that one of the placements at least will be in a frontline statutory setting. You will be asked to complete a personal profile to help the Local Authority identify a suitable placement for you.

Can I have a placement in the same team as I was previously employed?

- We won't place you in a team where you were previously employed. This would be a potential conflict of interest, and we want you to be able to experience as wide a range of settings as possible to get the most out of the course.

What are the hours when I am on placement?

- A placement day is a minimum of 7 hours excluding breaks. You will be expected to be at your placement during the same 'office hours' as the team.

- However, the needs of service users can mean that it is sometimes necessary for social workers and social work students to work extended hours, sometimes at short notice. When this happens, student social workers will be able to 'take back' this time in line with the host Local Authorities' policies & practice. Social work students are also allocated time to complete a reflective diary whilst on placement.

Will I be paid travel expenses when I am on placement?

- No, the bursary payment covers travel costs as well as all your other expenses. Some Local Authorities cover a wide geographical area and you will need to be a car driver to travel around on your placements. The Yorkshire and Humber regional partnership have recently agreed to pay business travel expenses whilst you are on placement.
- **What support is available to me whilst I am on placement?**
- You will be assigned a practice educator and a work-based supervisor whilst you are on placement with your host authority and will continue to have a University Practice tutor. Each authority has a Step Up to Social Work representative and you will be notified of who this is when you sign your trainee contract so you can contact them at any time.

What happens if I fail my placement?

- You will be assessed by the University for "Readiness to practice" prior to going on your first placement. You will be given two opportunities to pass this however should you fail on your second attempt we regret that this would mean that your contract will be ended.
- If you fail a placement, you will have the opportunity to attend a "concerns" meeting with the University. This allows for a full discussion of the reasons why the placement has failed. The University will advise you on the appeals procedure and how to go about submitting an appeal if you are eligible. You'll still receive your bursary until after the appeals process is finished.

Do I need to have a driving licence?

- You will not be required to drive if your host authority is a large city as you are able to use public transport. Some authorities don't have good transport links and therefore you will need to have a driving licence and the use of a car.
- You will need to provide your driving licence at the assessment centre if you are being interviewed for an urban and rural local authority (North East Lincs, North Lincs, East Riding).

I plan to take my driving test in Autumn 2024 – will you accept this?

- You must be able to produce your driving licence at the Assessment Centre if you are being interviewed for one of the urban and rural areas (see above). No offer can be made without this. We have accommodated people in the past who have not passed

their test by the start of the programme and this has caused major problems so we are unable to alter this decision.

Can I be seconded to the Step Up to Social Work programme from the Local Authority I am currently employed by?

- No, if you are offered a place on Step Up to Social Work following the Assessment Centre you will be required to resign from your current job by the time the programme starts in January 2024 as your status changes to being a student.
- The ethos of the course is for people who wish to change their careers and become children and families social workers.
- You must be sure that you are willing to do this, as you will lose your continuous service if you are employed by a public sector organisation (such as a local authority). This will mean that your service will start afresh should you join a local authority as a social worker.
- Most local authorities now run social work apprenticeship 3 year degree programmes for their existing staff, so if you are in doubt about your losing your employment rights then you should seek advice from your local authority about this route into social work.

Can I have a career break from my current employment?

- If you are employed in any authority within the Yorkshire and Humberside region you will not be afforded a career break. Career breaks are generally for up to one year only and this programme is for 14 months. The ethos of the Step Up to Social Work programme is for the DfE to fund people who wish to change their career to become a children and families social worker. The bursary gives you the opportunity to step out of employment to train and continue to be able to pay your household bills, however this is dependent on the cost of your bills and outgoings, you must be sure to check your finances carefully as the cost of living has increased significantly and yet the Step up bursary payment remains the same.

Can I have a part time job whilst I am on the Step Up programme?

- From our experience of previous cohorts, we would advise against taking a part time job, as the programme is so demanding. There can also be tax implications as the bursary is tax free as you are classed as a "student". Being in employment will change your employment status and you are advised to contact HMRC to find out the tax implications. Should you wish to have a job at the weekends and this does not affect your studying then you are allowed to do this but you will have to inform HMRC as your tax code may change.
- You will be required to study and complete assignments so you may not have any spare time for a part time job. The bursary awarded is much higher than a mainstream University to ensure that you are fully committed to this programme. Should you gain employment in the weeks leading up to the end of your programme and your contract then you must declare this to your host representative who will

stop your bursary payment as we cannot pay your bursary and a salary at the same time.

As a Step Up to Social Work candidate, will I officially be a student?

- You will be a University student so will receive a student card. You will be entitled to access any benefits that students may get e.g. discount on council tax, discounts that shops give students etc.

Do I have to pay course fees?

- No. The DfE are funding your course fees. You should read your trainee contract carefully as you may have to repay your bursary if you withdraw from the programme without good reason.

Am I guaranteed a job at the end of the programme?

- No, it is not possible to guarantee you a job but the Local Authorities within the Regional Partnerships will offer a guaranteed interview to Step Up to Social Work candidates and we will let you know when vacancies arise within the last 3 months of your course.
- We will offer all students the opportunity to attend an employability workshop which will give you guidance on how to complete an application form and interview tips.
- The employability rate for Step Up to Social Work students is currently 99% in this region.
- If you are offered a job during the course, you won't be able to start working until after the end of the course and the final bursary payment.

What happens if I am ill and need to take a break from the Step Up to Social Work programme?

- The Local Authority, Regional Partnership and University will work together in an attempt to maintain a student on the programme. However, because the programme is externally funded there are external constraints on the availability of the funding and therefore funding will not be available or cannot be deferred after the end of the 14 month programme.
- As all participants are registered University students, the University has an ongoing responsibility to support any student who is unable to complete the Step Up To Social Work programme due to ill health. This may include a transfer to one of its other qualifying social work programmes, support in transferring to a qualifying social work programme or a different programme at another University. You would have to pay course fees for transferring to another programme and would not receive the DfE bursary.
- If days are lost on placement due to illness, then it may be possible to extend the placement to ensure that your placement days are completed. This may involve you finishing the programme later than other students. The bursary payment will not be extended beyond the final programme date so you must be aware of this.

- Should you become pregnant during the programme then we will meet with you and discuss any reasonable adjustments that need to be made. We are only able to make a bursary payment to you if you attend the programme and complete all necessary work required. The programme will not be extended for any maternity leave due to restrictions of the DfE funding.

I will need special equipment and/or reasonable adjustments to undertake my course – how will I get this?

- Once you have been offered a place you will be asked to complete an Occupational Health form, where you can declare any requirements. If necessary the University provider will discuss with you how best to support you on your programme. Should you require reasonable adjustments for the assessment centre and the written exercise then you must indicate this on your application form and also remind the administrator to give you an additional 25% time.

What happens if I am successful but all the places in my preferred authority have been offered to others who have scored higher than me?

- If you have met the required benchmark at the assessment centre tests, then your name will go on a waiting list and you may be offered a place in another authority or in another partnership which may be in another part of the country.
- You should consider this offer very carefully as you may need to relocate and this will have an impact on your finances as there is no additional funding for relocation.
- You are strongly advised to work out your finances carefully before accepting any place offered.

When will I find out if I am successful and have been offered a place?

- Assessment centres for Step Up to Social Work across the country will finish by the end of July 2023. The lead authority for the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Partnership or the West and North Yorkshire Partnership will contact you at the beginning of August to inform you of the outcome of your assessment centre.
- Due to the high numbers of applicants we won't be able to give you feedback.

What will happen after I receive an offer?

- All offers will be conditional subject to references, academic checks and DBS checks. You will be required to give us permission to contact the academic institution who issued you with your degree certificate to verify authenticity.
- We will hold a "Keeping in Touch" event in the Autumn so that you can meet other students who will be on the programme. This is an opportunity for you to ask any other questions prior to signing the trainee contract. The University provider will contact you to complete DBS checks and medical checks.
- You are reminded that if you accept the offer of a place on this programme that you must resign from your current employment ready to start your programme in

January 2024. You are advised to find out how much notice you need to give your employer.

Keeping in Touch Day

- We will arrange for those who have been offered a place to meet other students across the region in Autumn 2023 at our Keeping in Touch Day event. This day will give you the opportunity to find out more about the programme, meet practice educators to ask more about placements. It is your responsibility to find out about any loss of benefits whilst you are on the course. If you are in receipt of child credit/Universal credit/free child places you must find out how accepting this course will affect these by contacting your citizens advice bureau or benefits advice centre etc.
- If you have any health-related questions or are worried about anything, there will be an opportunity to talk to the university lecturers or local authority reps about this.
- We will also invite speakers and have fun activities for you to bond with each other. We will pay your travel expenses to attend the day; please keep any train tickets to make your claim.
- As many people will still be in employment they may not be able to attend this day. You may want to take annual leave as it is a very informative day. We will also give you a suggested reading list and information to keep you informed until you start your programme in January.

Step Up to Social Work Induction Day

- Your first day on the programme in **January** will take place face to face in Sheffield for the Yorkshire and Humber region.
- You will already have been contacted by the University to complete a registration form and to enrol on the programme.
- You will be provided with a laptop prior to your first day of training.

Do you have a suggested reading list?

- You will be given a copy of the reading list as part of your induction day at the University.

Will I have an opportunity to ask further questions before starting on the course?

- The "Keeping in Touch" day will also serve as an opportunity to speak to representatives from your host authority and the University, who will be able to answer any further questions before you sign a trainee contract.
- If you can't attend the "Keeping in Touch" event, we will contact you separately to arrange another day so that you can complete your DBS check and ask any questions you might have.

When will I receive the trainee contract?

- Trainee contracts are typically sent out in October. This gives you plenty of time to work out your finances and decide whether to accept the offer. You are advised to consider your finances very carefully including any travel costs and any reduction in benefits that may apply.

Further information

For more information on Step Up to Social Work, look at:

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance: [Step Up to Social Work: Information for Applicants](#)

For North and West Yorkshire regional Partnership contact: Rebecca.Suaznabar@leeds.gov.uk

For Yorkshire and Humber regional Partnership contact: Dorothy.Smith@sheffield.gov.uk

If you're interested in other routes into the profession, find out more about [social work apprenticeships](#) and [social work](#)