



Step Up to Social Work 2020 Programme West Midlands Regional Partnership

Frequently Asked Questions

How is SUTSW different from other social work programmes?

Step Up to Social Work is a qualifying social work programme developed through a partnership between the 13 Local Authorities (LA) within the West Midlands Region and the University of Birmingham (UoB). It is an intensive 14 month programme, starting in January 2020 and leads to a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work. It covers the same curriculum as other PG qualifying social work programmes but within a shorter timescale. Therefore, it is a more intensive and emotionally demanding learning experience.

Students will have a contract for the duration of the programme with a host LA and both placements (70 days adult services and 100 days children's statutory services) will be provided by the LA. Students will receive a tax free bursary of £19,833. This will be paid by BACS into your bank account; £1322 per calendar month for 15 months. You will be paid around the 24th of each month and should plan this in order to change any direct debit payments. Your first payment will be on 24th January and therefore you should ensure you have enough money to pay for your travel/expenses to Birmingham from 13th January 2020 prior to your first bursary payment. To save on travel expenses, some student's car-share.

If I am offered a place but can't start in January 2020, can I defer my place until the next cohort?

Unfortunately, because there is only funding for this Cohort of SUTSW, you cannot defer your place as we have no guarantee that a further SUTSW programme will be funded.

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

The holidays are timetabled and therefore cannot be changed. Holidays are around Easter, end of summer, Christmas and all bank holidays. There are additional reading weeks. These are clearly marked on the time table.

Where and when is the programme taught?

The programme is taught at the UoB campus. We also use online teaching and directed study methods. From January 13th to May 2020 (exact date TBC) and September to middle of October 2020 you can expect to be in Birmingham for 5 full days teaching per week: the teaching day is 10am – 4pm.

The first week is a **five day** induction week and commences on **Monday 13th January 2020** through to **Friday 19th January 2020**.

There will be regular drop sessions with the programme manager throughout the programme; these are marked on the timetable.

When will I be on placement?

There are two periods of assessed practice:

- 70 days within an adult setting: May 2020 – August 2020 (exact dates tbc)
- 100 days within a children & families setting: October 2020 – March 2021 (exact dates tbc)

Placements also include a number of UoB recall days.

Can I choose where I have my placement?

You will sign a contract with one of the LAs within the Regional Partnership. This LA will identify and provide your placements. You will be asked to complete a personal profile to help the learning team identify suitable learning opportunities for you. Placement opportunities will be based on availability at your LA.

What are the hours when I am on placement?

A placement day is a minimum of 7.5 hours excluding breaks. You will be expected to be at your placement during the same “office hours” as the team you are based in.

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. If this happens, student social workers will be able to “take back” this time in line with the host LA policies and practice. You cannot accrue hours and take a whole day off as to meet the requirements of the placement you must do 70 or 100 days

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

You will not be paid for any travel to and from placement as your bursary covers this. You will be paid the student rate for business miles in line with the policies in your host the LA. These may differ across LA's.

Do I need to have a driving licence?

Apart from Birmingham City Council which has a good transport links you must have a driving licence for your placement. You must also have ‘for business use’ stated on your car insurance.

Can I be seconded to the SUTSW programme from the LA I am currently employed by?

No, if you are offered a place on the SUTSW programme following the Assessment Centre you will be required to resign from your current post. However individual LAs may consider a sabbatical arrangement.

Can I have a career break from my current employment?

If you are employed in any of the LAs within the West Midlands region you may be considered for a career break. However this is at the discretion of the individual LA. The ethos of this programme is to fund people who wish to change their career into becoming a children and families social worker.

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

From our experience of previous SUTSW 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. You will be required to study and complete assignments in your own time and it is unlikely that you will have any spare time for a part time job.

What will my status be?

You will be a student of the UoB and will be issued a student card. You will be entitled to access any benefits that students get e.g. discount on council tax, shop discounts, etc.

Do I have to pay course fees?

No. The DfE are funding your course fees. You should read your contract carefully to ensure you are aware of all the conditions.

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

No, it is not possible to guarantee you a job. However, your host LA will let you know what vacancies there are or are expected to be within the last three months of your course. The employability rate for Step Up students is currently 99% in this region. The application process will be discussed with you nearer the time.

What happens if I am ill and need to take a break from the SUTSW programme?

Your LA, Regional Partnership representative and UoB will work together to support you on the programme. However, because the programme is externally funded there are no opportunities to extend the funding. As all participants are registered students with the UoB, the University will support any student who is unable to complete the SUTSW programme due to ill health. This will include all available options for continuation of their studies, e.g. support with an application (via UCAS) to the UoB existing full-time MA qualifying social work programme. However, this is unlikely to have a bursary attached.

I have additional support needs and will need special equipment and/or reasonable adjustment plan (RAP) to undertake my course – how will I get this?

The UoB has a dedicated Student Support Service. You will learn more about this during your induction week. If you are in need of a RAP prior to starting the programme, you should contact UoB's Welfare Officer (based in Muirhead Tower) on 0121 414 5729 or sospwelfare@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Students can also access free counselling sessions, learning support assessments and follow up via the student support service. The student support service can be contacted on 0121 414 3344 or 0121 414 5130. This needs to be done by prior to starting the programme.

Will I have an opportunity to ask further questions before starting on the course? When will I receive the trainee contract?

There will be a "Keeping in Touch Day" in November 2019 (exact date tbc). Representatives from your host LA and UoB will attend in order to answer any further questions about the programme you may have. You are free to contact Michelle (see contact details below) or Jill Stephenson on Jill.Stephenson@stoke.gov.uk for further information at any time.

You will receive your contract by October 2019, dependant on receiving satisfactory checks and references.

[Apply to West Midlands step up to social work 2020](#)

We hope this begins to answer some of the many questions you may have. However should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact:

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Katie Craddock, UoB SUTSW Programme Administrator:

k.craddock@bham.ac.uk 0121 4145720 8.30am – 12.30pm