

Case studies of current Step Up cohort



Amos, 28, currently training in Barnet

Amos, who will be graduating from Step Up in 2021, says this of the programme:

“Step Up is a great opportunity to develop both practical skills and the theoretical knowledge to become an effective social worker, whilst working alongside experts in the field.”

Prior to Step Up, Amos spent around three years working in autistic primary and secondary schools as a learning support assistant, supporting young people by helping them to overcome the barriers to their learning. He also went on to be employed in the charity sector for a further three years at an educational social mobility charity.

When asked about his motivation when it came to applying:

“I see myself as a person who is driven by wanting to pursue social justice on one side and supporting and empowering the most vulnerable members of society to make crucial changes in their lives on the other. I believe that my skills are closely aligned with that of a social worker, being able to actively listen and my ability to build trusting relationships. All my work experience before training harnessed my skillset and required me to be empathetic, non-judgemental but also to make professional decisions, sometimes in difficult circumstances.”

When asked about his hopes once he’s a fully qualified social worker:

“Being able to support and empower families to make lasting changes that can positively impact on their lives and the lives of those around them.

I would like to specialise in systemic practice and undertake extra training within my borough to gain a comprehensive understanding of this important social work framework.

I hope to move into a career which puts the protection of young people, families and the vulnerable at the core.”

And his advice for those thinking of applying for the next round of Step Up?

“Make sure you are ready for the challenge and look upon it as a really exciting opportunity to gain new skills, develop personally and professionally and gain an extensive understanding of a whole line of work!”



Mark, 36, currently training at Goldsmith University

Mark, who is also due to graduate in 2021, tells us that he was partly inspired to enrol in Step Up due to his own personal experiences as a child.

“I was inspired to train in part as a result of my own experiences of poverty as a child and wanted to support others to access opportunities I had missed out on.”

His variety of previous employment and voluntary work, which includes being a Samaritans volunteer, working in specialist schools and working in accommodation for people with substance use needs, has led him to believe social work is the right path for him.

“I really enjoyed working holistically with children and young people and felt social work would be a good way to develop my skills in this area. I also felt social work would be a good way to open up several other career doors in terms of work with young people, including youth offending services, residential and safeguarding.

I hope this course will be a foundation to a more varied and perhaps more impactful future.”

His highlight so far?

“The ability to work closely with children and families to explore opportunities for individual empowerment and positive change. The face-to-face work is really enjoyable, as is the reflection with colleagues.

At present I’m proud of work I have been doing with a young girl who appears to have learning needs but is otherwise fairly quiet in the classroom. By exploring her attainment in more depth at reviews we are now seeking to explore her needs in depth after 4 years of her being looked after.”

Mark is certain that his plans, once he has graduated from the programme, include working with looked after children.

“I would also like to explore opportunities to develop advocacy support for children and families- particularly for children in need and for those affected by school exclusion risks.”

Finally, when asked for his advice and hopes for future candidates:

“Make sure you have strong experience of work with vulnerable young people.

I’m particularly aware I’m a man in a setting where there aren’t many men – it would be helpful to explore ways to engage men more in the workforce.”



Zeeshaan, 35, currently on Step Up programme at Middlesex University

Zeeshaan is a foster carer for his community and also a former Police Officer who had, up until making the decision to switch to social work, been in the Metropolitan Police for 9 years.

“Coming from a policing background, I have already worked closely with social workers when dealing with vulnerable young people and I have also worked in the child abuse investigation team.

Also being a foster carer, I have again worked closely with social workers and looked after a number of young people.”

He goes on to explain his reason for applying:

“I have so much hands on experience in working with young people that I wanted this to be brought under a registration. I would like to work my way up and become a manager in the service.”

How is he finding Step Up so far?

“The Step Up programme is intense but well organised. This year has been heavily impacted by the pandemic, but Middlesex University has been excellent in transferring our learning onto a virtual platform and have kept us on track to finish on time.”

His highlights include:

“Being able to effect change in people’s lives. Knowing you have helped other people. Holding cases and being the lead professional in challenging yet rewarding situations.

I have managed to work with a family and get help for a victim of domestic violence. Something she hasn’t had despite being a victim of it for 15 years.”

Any tips for future applicants?

“Be up for the challenge. This is an excellent course which I would recommend to anyone. It has a bit of everything and will give you an excellent insight into the role. It requires a lot of hard work and determination. It’s all worth it in the end!”