



Department of Health & Social Care



Department for Education

Dear Social Work Students,

Thank you from your Chief Social Workers

This year marked 50 years since the creation of local authority social services, a milestone that we had hoped to celebrate with you on World Social Work Day and with other events throughout the year. Unfortunately, as we have all experienced, this year has needed us to focus and respond to more significant issues.

We are now seven months into the pandemic, seven months that has seen you and your colleagues respond beyond all expectations. As a profession, we have continued to advocate for individuals and delivered the best possible support and care that our communities have needed. We have also seen great examples of innovation, resilience and support set up across the country led by students for the social work student community.

We have no doubt that for many of us our dedication will have come at a cost – long hours, frustration and a sense of helplessness in the face of, what has been, a relentless and unforgiving virus which has taken the lives of the very people we have committed to supporting.

More recently, the murder of George Floyd has sparked protests and challenge across the world. The scenes and structural issues brought to the surface have caused us to reflect on our profession's role in adequately tackling racism and oppression in our services and communities. We were pleased to hear that we have the most diverse community of students in the country, and as one of the most diverse professions in the country, we must continue to reflect on our practice and actions. We must ensure we continue to uphold our social work values, challenge discrimination and oppression, advocating for our peers and communities who experience it within our sector.

What is most important right now is that we ensure we look after ourselves and our colleagues as we approach what may be a difficult winter. We should make sure we are taking the time to acknowledge how we are feeling and share this with one another and across social work networks.

We must not lose sight of the fact that collectively we are part of an amazing sector that makes a difference to the people we support on any given day, and crucially in what can be the most difficult of times. We are very proud to be members of a profession that is epitomised by practice, care and humanity, and look forward to your journey in joining us.

Thank you.

Mark Harvey and Fran Leddra

Joint- Chief Social Workers for Adults

Isabelle Trowler

Chief Social Worker for Children and Families