**Relevant experience**

To be eligible to apply for the MSc in Social Work programme at the University of Bristol, you will ideally have a minimum of six months’ experience in any area of work which is relevant to social work. This may be either full-time or part-time paid work and/or voluntary experience. If you do not meet this threshold, the admissions officer has discretion on whether to progress your application to interview depending on your ability to evaluate your experiences within your personal statement.

You will need to be able to demonstrate that you have gained this experience before starting the course. However, if you are in the process of gaining this experience at the time of applying, the application may still be considered, but a further reference may be needed at a later date to confirm the level of experience achieved.

We will also consider individuals who may have had personal experience of social care or social support services, and who are interested in social work as a career. Again, this will depend on the applicant’s ability to utilize their life experiences within their personal statement - particularly on how these led to a decision to pursue studies in social work.

**What is 'relevant' to social work?**

Understandably, we are often asked by applicants what we consider to be

'relevant' experience. The following guidance is not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive, since social work is a dynamic field of work where new needs, responses and organisations are regularly developing. The examples given below, of work which is directly or partly relevant to social work, are mainly illustrative of work in the UK. Please note that we also welcome applicants with international experience, either because you are an international student, or because you have undertaken paid or voluntary work abroad. The range of experience which students bring to the course is an important element in the learning and teaching available for all students.

The key elements we are looking for in any experience involve demonstrable interest and commitment combined with practical experience. Whatever form this experience takes, it should ideally include the following elements:

• Face-to-face work, in-person or online, or telephone work with people

• Working with people going through different emotional experiences

• Problem-solving and/or counselling skills

• Responsibility and decision-making

• Some knowledge of the social work task, law and procedures.

Together, these elements should provide you with the opportunity to gain a foundation understanding of the knowledge, skills and values of social work.

**Types of work which are relevant to social work**

Here, we list a range of types of work which are directly or partly relevant to social work, while keeping in mind that generalisations are difficult since each agency may work in a different way. Hopefully, the more general guidance given above will help you judge if the work you are doing is providing you with a foundation understanding of the knowledge, skills and values of social work. Please also refer to the 'more directly relevant' or 'partly relevant' categories for additional guidance as follows.

**More directly relevant**

Any direct role involving social work skills, including residential social work, day care, community work; counselling and advice work; foster care; youth work; personal support work for disabled or older people; mental health nursing, mental health recovery work or mental health care assistant work; work in residential schools for children with special needs where the role contains a high degree of pastoral care; support work in high support housing projects or hostels; mentoring of young people or others; working with self-help groups; supporting volunteers including organizing training.

**Partially relevant**

Play group/nursery/creche work; playscheme work; nursing home experience; teaching experience in ‘special needs’ work; housing advice work; job coaching, assisting in schools; basic skills tutoring; general nursing/nursing assistant work including district nursing; general teaching.

If your experience mainly falls into the 'partially relevant' category, it may be that specific tasks and projects you have undertaken in this work are more relevant to social work. For example, as a teacher you have had a major pastoral role, or in nursing you have worked particularly in supporting patients with social needs. It will be important that you explain and draw on this experience in your application.

**Further information**

If you are still unsure about the relevance of your experience, please contact the Social Work Admissions Tutors Jo Toye (email: jo.toye@bristol.ac.uk) or Harriet Tamlyn (h.tamlyn@bristol.ac.uk) who will be able to address your particular queries.