

Jess Munday is a student on the MA Social Work programme at the University of York. She is currently undertaking a 100 day practice placement in Health and Adult Services within North Yorkshire County Council.

Tell us about your placement.

It's great to be part of a diverse, experienced and friendly team and I've felt really supported and welcomed in my final placement. There have been lots of opportunities to shadow and co-work a range of cases and to explore areas of particular interest such as mental health and hospital discharge. My day to day activities have included completing assessments and support plans for carers and service users, alongside working with individuals to complete specific goals such as increasing social activities.

What are you enjoying most about your placement and what have you found challenging?

I really enjoy working with people and it's been a joy to meet and work with a range of people and their families. I've been encouraged by people's resilience and kindness to one another in the midst of difficult circumstances and it's been a real privilege to be able to empower and support individuals to make positive changes in their lives. The biggest challenge has been navigating and learning the process around adult social care, the procedures which we work within and the challenges of funding. Finally, getting the work, life and university balance has been tricky; especially while writing a dissertation!

How does this compare to your first placement?

My first placement was with children and was split between a UK based advocacy service and a Ugandan charity working to promote foster care. I really valued developing advocacy skills and have definitely taken the communication and listening skills into this placement. My time in Uganda really challenged my perspectives of social work and I was inspired by the willingness of the community to gather around and support those who needed care, often at a financial cost to themselves. It highlighted just how life changing access to education and health care can be and how difficult it is as a social worker to empower and promote autonomy when people live in poverty with little choice or control over their lives. Comparing it to this placement (and avoiding a political debate on current policy and austerity), it makes me grateful for the welfare state, for the NHS and the laws in place to protect, empower and promote choice to those who need support. Finally, it highlights the importance of valuing and upholding social justice as a core social work value and the importance of taking an anti-oppressive approach.