

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Joanna Hargreaves, Matron of a girl's boarding house



What part of the job motivates you and why?

"The girls, I love the relationship I have with them. Even after they have left the school, many still stay in touch, visiting if they happen to be in the area. I recently received an email titled – "Happy Mothers' Day to my second mother."

Joanna didn't always work in social services. She worked in an office after leaving college and also spent time working for North Yorkshire County Council before taking on a learning support role at Giggleswick School in the Yorkshire Dales.

Read more about her role working in social services.



Can you tell us about your job?

My main role is to be an adult present in the house and be responsible for the welfare of the girls by assisting the Housemistress and her team.

My duties include:

- pastoral care of the boarding community and day pupils
- ensuring pupils are in the right place at the right time
- laundry administration
- health and safety (daily room checks for fire hazards)
- emotional support to the pupils and general administration and assistance in the smooth running of the house.

What are you working on at the moment?

As we near the end of term, one of my key roles is to organise travel plans for the girls whose parents are unable to collect them directly. This can include booking taxis and flights in addition to arranging heavy items, such as study books, being sent to their homes via courier.

What challenges do you face in your job?

No day's the same. All the students get to know their own Matron and many enjoy popping by for a chat. However, there are days when students are upset and it's my role to listen while providing a supportive and safe environment for them to talk it through. I'll do anything for them.

What qualifications do you need for this job?

To comply with SSSC registration I completed the SVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care, Children and Young People. At first I found the training quite hard, but with the continued support of my colleagues, we worked through the course together and ended up having a good laugh. Now that I'm qualified, I'm glad I've done it, it's something that I've achieved.

I'm lucky that Gordonstoun School encourages personal development, not just for the pupils but also for the staff. If I see a course, I only have to request to attend.

Qualifications are important in demonstrating the quality of the staff. We are responsible for the pupils, we have to work together to make sure their time here, and afterwards, is fulfilled.

Can you explain who else is on your team?

As the Matron, I am directly responsible to the Housemistress and, in her absence, the Assistant House Mistress. Six tutors also support the pastoral team.

Although the team work closely on all matters relating to the running of the House and its pupils, the Housemistress is responsible for taking the final decision.

What part of your job motivates you and why?

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In what way is a career in Social Services rewarding?

Job satisfaction and helping people.

Can you explain the skills and qualities you think are needed to do the role you're doing? Good personal interactive skills with young people and their parents and guardians by being caring, patient, a good listener with an ability to show empathy.

Having a flexible outlook is also important. Although I always have a list of jobs that need to be completed, the students always come first. I don't class my job as work, I love it so much.

What training and development opportunities have you undertaken while in your current job?

If there's a course available and I'm able to attend, I'll usually put my name down eg fire training, first aid or other.

How do you see career your progressing?

Not being teaching staff, if I wanted to progress I would probably need to move to another school. I have great job satisfaction in the role I do and I am happy to stay at Gordonstoun School for the foreseeable future.

What would you say to someone looking to work in your role?

The role requires commitment and hard work but can be rewarding with great job satisfaction.

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