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PRESS RELEASE

‘Covid volunteer nurses’ begin careers in Dudley

Student nurses who stepped in to help care for patients in Dudley at the height of the coronavirus pandemic are now set to begin their careers here.

As the outbreak took hold, those taking nursing degrees were asked to help the NHS by moving into clinical practice earlier than they would have done.

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust welcomed 150 second and third year students and more than 50 of the third year students due to qualify later this summer have opted to remain in permanent posts. Other third year student nurses due to qualify later this year are also looking to stay in Dudley.

They have come from universities as far afield as London, Nottingham, Sheffield, Birmingham, Keele and Coventry, as well as with the Trust’s partner universities in Wolverhampton and Worcester.

The Trust’s chief nurse Mary Sexton said: “We were delighted to welcome the student nurses and they went straight to work in every ward and department, including with our most poorly COVID-19 patients.

“This wasn’t something they had to do and we’ve been so impressed by their courage and dedication.

“The second year students will stay with us to complete the hours they need to do as part of their degree, and return to studying next year. We will be keeping in touch with them and hope to welcome them back when they qualify.”

Hannah Gray is a student nurse from Worcester University who is joining The Dudley Group. She is based on the stroke ward. She said: “If you had told me at Christmas that I would be working on a ward I wouldn’t have believed you – I was planning on community nursing or in a care home. I was really nervous but within the first two weeks I thought ‘I really love this place’. There’s a really good vibe and they are so supportive of students while pushing you to get better.

“My ward went from being a normal ward to completely COVID and I was anxious to start with but the nurses were so supportive that after just an hour I felt quite calm. Being in the Trust calmed my nerves.”

Val Deeley is another Worcester student who has been working on the trauma and orthopaedic ward and is staying with the Trust. She said: "Coming here was a really, really easy decision. They've been absolutely fantastic, not just on the ward but the professional development team. Dudley have been looking after us all."

Trust chief executive Diane Wake said: "We are delighted to be welcoming these new nurses to Dudley and to helping them build meaningful and fulfilling careers with us, providing the best possible care to our community."

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Issued by the communications team at The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.