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Covid-19: Charity offers scholarships to bereaved children of healthcare staff

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A UK charity is offering education scholarships worth £5000 (€5600; \$6900) a year to children of NHS health and care workers who died from covid and who are going on to higher education.

Launched on 10 August, the day that A level results came out in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the memorial scholarships are part of the package of support offered by the Healthcare Workers' Foundation (healthcareworkersfoundation.org), set up in March 2020 to support the relatives of healthcare workers who have died during the covid pandemic.

Dom Pimenta, the charity's cofounder and chairman, said that 1500 healthcare workers had died in the UK since the start of the pandemic.

The foundation said that the sudden loss of a loved one can leave families struggling financially as well as emotionally, which spurred it to create its Families Programme. This has helped more than half a million healthcare workers by providing £48 000 in childcare grants, £69 000 for counselling, and over £70 000 for hardship and safe surgery initiatives, as well as delivering tens of thousands of items of personal protective equipment and hot meals.

Pimenta said that losing a parent deprives children of opportunity, connections, mentoring, and security. "We can't hope to fully replace that, but our ambition is to restore to the bereaved children of healthcare workers as far as humanly possible some of that access and security they have lost," he said.

Pimenta said he had benefited from financial support during university. "To get through medical school I myself relied on scholarship funding, and that was with the support of my family, financially and emotionally. Getting through without either would have been immensely difficult, if not impossible," he said. There was evidence from Italy that grants helped reduce dropout rates, he said.¹

Anna Sazuze, who took tutoring lessons provided by the Families Programme, said that these had helped to boost her confidence while studying in the lead up to exams this summer.

For further details on the memorial scholarships and eligibility requirements email families@healthcareworkersfoundation.org.

¹ Facchini M, Triventi M, Vergolini L. Do grants improve the outcomes of university students in a context with high dropout rates? Evidence from a matching approach. *SocArXiv* 2019 [Preprint]. doi: 10.31235/osf.io/k3gww.

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