

Thinking Ahead?

Social work

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Learner Services

What does a Social Worker do and where do they work?

Social work is a profession that is centred on people of all ages - from babies through to older people. They work with different groups of people such as young people and their families, the elderly, people with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health difficulties, drug and alcohol addiction, young offenders, and the homeless, to help improve outcomes in their lives. They may be helping to protect vulnerable people from harm or abuse or supporting people to live independently. Social workers support people, act as advocates and direct people to the services they may require.

Social workers are employed in a wide range of settings. They often work in multi-disciplinary teams alongside health and education professionals in NHS Trusts or local authority departments that provide services for children or adults. Many work in the private and voluntary sector. More recently Social Workers have set up their own company, or work with others to contract for work.

What skills and personal qualities do they need?

- Patience and the ability to remain calm in a crisis
- Resilience
- Flexibility to adapt to new roles, tasks and situations
- Initiative
- Strong observation, analytical and listening skills
- The capacity to absorb legal and procedural information
- The ability to negotiate, mediate and interpret on behalf of service users
- Good organisational skills to work autonomously and plan meetings for a caseload of clients.
- General administrative skills
- Empathy combined with a genuine desire to improve the quality of the lives of service users is essential
- The ability to think on your feet and make difficult decisions under pressure.
- An interest or participation in some aspect of your local community is useful.

How do I get into Social Work?

UNDERGRADUATE ROUTE:

If you do not have a degree you will need to complete a BA Hons degree in Social Work. The degree must be accredited by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The degree usually takes 3 years to complete full time but some longer part time routes may also be available.

Entry requirements differ between course providers, but you are usually required to have some GCSE's including, English and Math's, plus a relevant level 3 qualification such as a BTEC National Diploma or an Access to Higher Education course.

You will also need some experience of social work or social care prior to studying. This experience can be achieved through paid work, voluntary work, work placements or life experience. Some people may for example have been a carer to a friend or relative which has given them an insight into social work.

POST GRADUATE ROUTE:

A minimum 2:2 honors degree is usually required for the Postgraduate training. Some universities and work based training programs will only accept applicants with at least a 2:1, so check with each provider. Applicants will also need to have passed GCSE (or recognised equivalent) Math's and English at Grade 4 - 9 or, C and above.

University led route:

Post Graduate Master's Degree in Social Work – usually 2 years in length

Work based Post Graduate routes:

There are work based programmes available for graduates with a 2:1 in any discipline wanting to specialise in different areas of Social Work.

Step-up to Social Work and Frontline are for those wishing to get into the field of Children and Families. Think Ahead is a graduate programme for those wanting to become a mental health social worker.

- Step up to Social Work is an intensive full-time training programme that covers everything trainee social workers need to know in 14 months and is also funded. <https://www.gov.uk/step-up-to-social-work-information-for-applicants>
- Frontline is a two year funded full-time training programme benefitting from intensive practical and academic training. www.thefrontline.org.uk
- Think Ahead is also a two year funded programme: <https://thinkahead.org/>

Where can I study?

Access to Higher Education courses and GCSE's:

If you do not meet the entry requirements for the degree courses, adults can take Access to Higher education courses. You would generally need GCSEs in Maths and English at grade C or above before starting the course.

Ask your advisor for a separate list of contact details for local Colleges and Universities. (The list also shows which colleges offer which GCSE's to adults)

Degree and Post Graduate degree courses: The following local Universities offer degree and postgraduate degree courses that are registered by the Health and Care Professions Council:

Manchester Metropolitan University - Tel: 0161 247 6969

- BA (Hons) Social Work (3 years full time)
- MA in Social Work (2 years full time)

<http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/social-care-and-social-work/>

University of Salford - Tel: 0161 295 4545 <http://www.salford.ac.uk/study>

- BA (Hons) Social Work - Part time and Full time
- MA in Social Work - Part time and Full time

University of Manchester - Tel: 0161 306 6000 <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/>

- MA in Social Work – Full Time

Open University - Tel: 01908 274066 <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/find/social-work>

- BA Hons in Social Work

Funding

If you're training to qualify as a Social Worker, you may be eligible for a bursary. The bursary is a grant to help pay for tuition fees and living costs. It doesn't depend on your household income and it doesn't have to be paid back.

Contact the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) for up to date information:
<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students>

Undergraduate students may also be able to get help from the main student finance package. Apply to Student Finance England:
<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

What are the job prospects in Social Work? - Labour Market Information

Social Work is a large employment sector and has grown in recent years although cuts in public funding have slowed this growth down. There will be opportunities in the future due to its size and growing demand for Social Care.

<http://careerpoint-gm.co.uk/staff/labour-market-information/sectors/health>

Other sources of information

Prospects - Job Profiles - <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/social-worker>

The British Association of Social Workers - www.basw.co.uk/social-work-careers/

Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) Learner Advisors can give advice on careers, education, training and support with job search. Make an appointment at your local centre: <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/adulted>

National Careers Service: Careers advice, job search, CV's and skills assessment.
Freephone: 0800 100 900 <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

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