

Careers involving Health & Social Care



Health & social care realities

It's all about helping people. Careers in healthcare are about helping people who are having problems with their physical health. Careers in social care are concerned with helping vulnerable people in the community and providing them with support so that they can benefit from a much more improved way of life.

Health and social care is an especially broad career sector. Tons of different career paths are available for people from all different kinds of academic backgrounds. Careers in healthcare are much more likely to require a combination of further study and on-the-job medical training, whereas careers in social care are more likely to start with on-the-job training and allow people to work towards professional qualifications later on in their career.

Everybody is dependent on the specialist skills of healthcare professionals at some point (even if it's only when they are born). Not everybody becomes directly involved with social care initiatives. However, everyone is likely to encounter the many social issues that require the hard work of social care professionals. Careers in health and social care are some of the most important in the world. These employees not only help people on an individual basis, but make a difference to society as a whole.

Understandably, the key word to consider when contemplating a career in this sector is 'care'. People who work in this sector truly care about helping other people. Without that level of concern and desire to make a difference, it is impossible to succeed in the health and social care world.

In order to thrive in these careers, you need to have the ability to build relationships with patients and service users. It is essential that people trust you, and therefore patience, friendliness and fantastic communication skills are needed. These careers are some of the most rewarding you can pursue, but can also be the most challenging emotionally. You certainly need to be genuinely compassionate and caring, but you need to be thick-skinned too.

Health & social care options

The NHS (National Health Service) is the largest employer in Europe (over one million employees); however, many private institutions also employ tons of people in the healthcare arena. A large amount of these people are employed as doctors, dentists, paramedics, nurses and midwives, but plenty more are engaged within managerial, I.T. and administration work.

There are many different specialist careers available within the healthcare system, including: clinical support staff, such as donor carers and new-born hearing screeners; allied health professionals, such as radiographers and orthoptists; and specialist therapy staff, such as occupational therapists, speech therapists and art therapists.

There are so many different paths to take when pursuing a career in social care. Social care work can be done in a variety of different environments: in people's own homes, in residential care units, in shelters for the homeless, and in young offender institutes. However, people tend to specialise in one area, which is defined by the kind of service users they work with and their specific type of social problems, such as domestic violence, asylum, or mental health. Most people will have heard of social workers. These guys operate at a more senior level and deal with the complex problems of service users with critical social needs. They assess the specific needs of individuals and offer them expert advice and support. They also work closely with social care workers and direct them in what extra specialist care the service user should receive. Social care workers tend to be more actively involved with providing personal and hands-on care to service users. The professionals employed in this area of work include: people who provide physical support for people with mobility issues, counsellors who provide mental health advice and support, and advisors who support people who are looking to foster. Many areas of social care also require support staff who do not provide active care functions, such as managers and administrative support staff.

The quality and integrity of health and social care professionals is of paramount importance in keeping service users safe. Consequently, all

applicants will have to undergo basic security checks before they can work in this sector. This can often involve undergoing a standard DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

Careers in health and social care are undoubtedly amongst the most challenging, but they can also be the most satisfying. They require empathy, responsibility, perseverance and, above all, a strong desire to help others. If that sums you up, then a job in health and social care may be the one for you. The social care sector offers a variety of health and social care jobs in a range of settings, including schools, hospitals and family homes. Explore the different paths you could pursue and see which role matches your ambitions

Adult guidance worker

Also known as education guidance workers, personal advisers or welfare advisers, adult guidance workers explain what education, work or training options are available to people and help them to make informed choices. You can work with marginalised or hard-to-reach groups such as the unemployed, disabled people, adults with learning difficulties or those without qualifications.

Starting salaries range from £19,000 to £23,000. Senior advisers can earn over £35,000. This job is open to graduates of all degree subjects; entry without a degree or HDN is possible for those with relevant experience, as long as they're prepared to train on the job.

Gain an insight into the role of an adult guidance worker.

Advice worker

You'll work to provide free, impartial, confidential advice to clients on a range of issues including debt, employment, housing and welfare and education. Advice is given face-to-face, over the phone and via email and web chat services. Starting salaries range between £16,000 and £23,000. While a degree isn't required, many advice workers do possess a degree or postgraduate qualification.

You'll work in a variety of settings including advice and community centres, courts, doctor's surgeries and prisons.

Discover what it's like to work as an advice worker.

Care manager

In this role you're responsible for the day-to-day running of a residential care setting. You can work in elderly or nursing homes, children's homes, hospice

care or supported housing. You'll recruit staff, manage budgets and ensure quality care is provided.

While a degree isn't necessary many care managers have management qualifications or go on to further study in their area of specialism, for example dementia or autism studies. A nursing, social work or health and social care degree can increase your chances of entry.

Average salaries for care managers depend on your role and service, but can range from £25,500 to £37,000.

Find out more about working as a care manager.

Child psychotherapist

Social care jobs enable you to work with a variety of people of all ages, including children. As a child psychotherapist you'll offer treatment to children and young people suffering from depression, aggression, anxiety, phobias, eating disorders, self-harming and psychosomatic disorders. You'll treat children individually or in groups and work to support other professionals such as teachers, social workers and youth workers.

You'll need an honours degree to get onto one of the accredited training routes provided by the Association of Child Psychotherapists (ACP) or the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and extensive experience of working with babies, children, young people or families.

Discover what you could earn as a child psychotherapist.

Cognitive behavioural therapist (CBT)

Also known as a talking therapist or behavioural therapist, CBT practitioners use talking therapy to help clients suffering with depression, anxiety OCD and panic disorders to overcome negative patterns of thinking and behaviour.

To get into this line of work you'll need a degree in arts therapy, nursing, occupational therapy, psychology, psychotherapy or social work, as well as experience of working in mental health and a postgraduate CBT qualification.

Average salaries range from £26,500 to £41,500.

Community arts worker

Social care jobs also cover working with the local community. As a community arts worker you'll use a range of art forms to engage with service users, including crafts, creative writing, dance, music, theatre and visual arts to support their development and improve their quality of life. You can work with

young people, young offenders, the homeless, ethnic minorities and the elderly.

Typical starting salaries for administrative roles are £16,000, rising to between £20,000 and £30,000 for experienced community arts workers.

Look out for alternative job titles such as arts development officer, youth arts practitioner, and community projects assistant.

Take a look at the qualifications you'll need to become a community arts worker.

Community development worker

Helping communities to bring about social change and improve quality of life you'll work with individuals, families and community groups to tackle inequality and set goals for improvement. You'll act as the link between communities and a range of other local authority and voluntary sector providers, such as the police, social workers and teachers.

This area of work is open to all graduates and those with an HND but a degree or HND in social sciences may improve your chances. Entry without a degree or HND is possible, although career development is more restricted.

Learn more about the salary of a community development worker.

Community education officer

Social care jobs can often cross over with other sectors such as healthcare, and in this case teaching and education. As a community education officer you will help to organise and promote participation in local education or training opportunities. You'll work in diverse communities, often in areas of social deprivation or high unemployment.

Starting salaries in the public sector range from £23,500 to £28,000. An equivalent position in the voluntary sector may attract a lower figure.

You can enter this profession with any degree although a degree, HND or foundation degree in community education, educational studies, English or communication studies, social sciences or youth work may improve your chances.

Read more about the role of a community education officer.

Counselling psychologist

This is a social care job that could easily be mistaken for a healthcare role. As a counselling psychologist you'll use psychological theory and research to help

clients with bereavement, domestic violence, relationship troubles, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychosis. You'll work with children, adults, families and couples.

You'll need to undergo a high level of training to qualify.

Find out more about salary expectations and the qualifications you need to become a counselling psychologist.

Counsellor

In this particular social care job you'll help people to explore feelings and emotions related to their experiences, working in a confidential setting. The aim is to reduce a client's confusion and enable them to cope with challenges, or to make positive changes in their life where necessary. Counsellors don't give advice, but help clients to make their own choices.

You don't need a degree or HND, as there are separate qualifications available at different levels.

Starting salaries vary but can be in the region of £20,000 to £26,000.

Find out what to expect from your job as a counsellor and discover some of the essential skills for a career in counselling.

Dramatherapist

Using the performing arts, it's your job to create a safe environment in which you and your patients can explore and address a range of personal and social difficulties. You'll use interventions such as puppetry, role play and storytelling to help both children and adults express issues in a way that's easier than talking about them directly.

Professional postgraduate training is currently offered at four UK universities. To gain entry onto a course, you'll typically need a degree in a performing arts or psychology-related subject, or other professional qualifications and relevant experience.

If you join the NHS once qualified you're likely to be employed at Band 6, where salaries range from £28,050 to £36,644. Find out more about becoming a dramatherapist.

Drug and alcohol worker

Your aim is to help people tackle their drug and alcohol addiction. You'll assist clients in accessing counselling, healthcare and education and will work irregular and unsocial hours, due to the on-call nature of the job.

There are no set entry requirements but experience of nursing, criminal justice, social care or youth work will be incredibly valuable.

Over the course of your career, salaries will range from £17,000 to £40,000.

Educational psychologist

Working with children and young people between the ages of 10 and 19 you'll help solve problems that hinder their successful learning and participation in school and other activities. These problems can include a range of emotional and social problems or learning difficulties. You will work in a variety of ways including observations, interviews and assessments and offer a range of appropriate interventions, such as learning programmes and collaborative work with teachers or parents.

A further aspect to the job is research and advising on educational provisions and policies.

Discover more about the role of an educational psychologist.

Equality and diversity officer

The aim of this role is to promote good relations and practices towards different minority groups. You'll work within community services, supporting people who experience discrimination related to age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

You'll typically start on a salary of £18,000 to £28,000.

You can become an equality and diversity officer with any degree subject although qualifications in business and management, community or youth studies, human resources, law, psychology or social work may increase your chances. A pre-entry postgraduate qualification in race equality, policy development or equality and diversity is helpful if you have an unrelated first degree.

For further information on skills and work experience see equality and diversity officer.

Family mediator

You'll need a degree in counselling, education, law, social work or therapy, as well as up to five years' relevant experience to become a family mediator. Family mediators work with divorcing or separating couples and help them to reach agreements without having to go to court. You need to be impartial and able to give factual and legal information if required.

Over the course of your career you can expect to earn a salary of £20,000 to £35,000.

Family support worker

Employed by social services, local authorities or charitable organisations you'll assist families who are experiencing difficulties by offering practical help and emotional support. You could help parents and children with a range of social and personal issues, or specialise in a particular area, such as domestic abuse, bereavement or homelessness. Look out for alternative job titles such as family intervention officer, family outreach officer, key worker or parenting support worker.

Entry routes are extremely varied, although a combination of relevant experience and qualifications is usually required. Starting salaries are typically between £18,000 and £24,000.

Read more about what it takes to become a family support worker.

High intensity therapist

Working for the NHS or a charitable organisation you'll support individuals of all ages and cultural backgrounds who are experiencing mental health conditions, in particular moderate to severe depression and anxiety. You'll manage a caseload of 30 to 40 clients per year. Managing referrals and signposting to other agencies are common parts of the role and you'll need to work closely with other healthcare professionals.

The working environment can be stressful and challenging, as you'll be working with distressed people with high emotional demands. Therefore, supervision by colleagues is important.

Take a look at what qualifications you need to become a high intensity therapist.

Housing policy officer

There are a number of social care jobs available in housing, for example, housing policy officer where you research and develop policies for local authorities and housing associations. The work could focus on affordable housing, homelessness or tenant participation. You'll need a relevant degree such as housing studies, town planning or social policy, or a professional qualification to enter the profession.

Over the course of your career you could earn £22,000 to £40,000.

Life coach

As a life coach, your main responsibility is to develop a positive relationship with your clients in order to help them achieve their goals. This could be in a one-to-one setting or through group workshops, in areas such as career coaching, health and wellbeing and personal development.

You'll need a non-judgemental, motivational attitude and a creative approach to problem solving to tailor coaching to the individual or group. It's likely you'll be self-employed, and as a private practitioner can expect to earn between £40 and £60 per hour.

Learn more about the role of a life coach.

Play therapist

You'll need a relevant undergraduate degree, a postgraduate qualification and registration with appropriate professional bodies to become a play therapist. In this role you'll work with children aged 3 to 11 using play as a communication tool to help them understand their world and to help them deal with emotional distress and trauma. The issues that you deal with may be related to abuse, divorce, violence, learning difficulties and psychological problems, so your working day may be stressful and challenging.

Starting salaries can range from £25,000 to £35,000 per year.

Find out what it's like to work as a play therapist.

Probation officer

Working for the National Probation Service (NPS) you'll manage offenders in order to protect the public and reduce the incidence of reoffending. You'll interact with offenders, victims, police and prison service colleagues on a regular basis and work with offenders in courts, in the community and in custody to make communities safer.

Probation service officers (PSOs), new entrants to the profession, start on NPS pay band 3 and receive a salary of £22,039 to £27,373.

Find out how to qualify as a probation officer.

Rehabilitation worker

Typically providing support to those who have suffered from illness or are recovering from an accident, as a rehabilitation worker you may be required to help keep patients mobile through exercises or use of specialist equipment, carry out household tasks such as cooking and cleaning, and organise social activities for patients.

The role requires excellent observation skills, an empathetic approach to challenging situations and emotional resilience. Entry routes are varied, but holding relevant professional qualifications is advantageous.

Salaries for rehabilitation workers typically range from £17,000 to £25,000, reaching up to £27,000 with experience.

Sexual health worker

Working with individuals, couples or groups, in this social care job you'll provide education and guidance on a range of sexual health topics, including diagnosis and treatment of STIs, promoting good sexual health practices and offering counselling and support in emotionally difficult situations.

A degree related to public health, as well as relevant experience in a healthcare setting (such as nursing, counselling or social work) are typically what's needed to become a sexual health adviser. Relevant courses are also provided by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).

Starting salaries range from £26,000 to £30,000.

Social services manager

Also known as services managers and service development managers, social services managers plan and coordinate health and social care support provided by local authorities and charities.

You'll need excellent leadership and project management skills, a degree and professional qualifications relevant to the area in which you work, for example, social work or mental health and several years of management experience.

You'll also need a clear understanding of legislation, safety standards and social policy to enter this career.

You'll typically start on a salary of £37,000, rising to £75,000 with extensive experience.

Social worker

In this job you'll work with people and families to support them through difficult times and ensure that vulnerable people, including children and adults are safeguarded from harm. You'll work in a variety of settings such as homes, schools, hospitals or the premises of other public sector and voluntary organisations. It's a challenging role and one that isn't always well received - as a result, the government is putting more measures in place to support and develop a strong workforce of social workers.

Newly qualified social workers should expect to earn £22,000, rising to £40,000 with experience.

Social work is a graduate profession and you will need an undergraduate degree or a postgraduate qualification in social work. Other fast-track entry routes are available, see social work courses.

For further information on what the profession involves, see social worker.

Youth offending team officer

In this role your aim is to prevent children and young people under the age of 18 from offending and reoffending. To work with high risk and vulnerable young people you'll need empathy, patience and a non-judgemental attitude.

Most officers have a degree in criminology, youth justice, youth work or social work although there are no set entry requirements.

Over the course of your career you could earn £20,000 to £38,000.

Youth worker

Working mainly in the public sector with those aged between 11 and 25, youth workers guide and support young people in their personal, social and educational development to help them reach their full potential.

Relevant work experience is vital for entry, as is an undergraduate degree validated by the National Youth Agency (NYA). Professional training is also available at postgraduate level for those with a degree in a subject other than youth work.

Youth support workers (e.g. those who are not fully-qualified professional youth workers) can expect to earn between £15,807 and £26,929