



**Cyngor Gofal Cymru**  
Care Council for Wales

*Hyder mewn Gofal - Confidence in Care*

# SOCIAL WORK

## A PEOPLE PROFESSION



**A POSITIVE CAREER CHOICE**

[www.ccwales.org.uk](http://www.ccwales.org.uk)



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# SOCIAL WORK - A PEOPLE

This booklet, published by the Care Council for Wales (Care Council), provides an insight into social work as a career. It outlines what the job involves and the skills, qualifications and experience required. You will also find answers to frequently asked questions about the profession.

More information can be found on our website [www.ccwales.org.uk](http://www.ccwales.org.uk)

The Care Council was established in 2001 to promote high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers and high standards in their training. We approve social work qualifying training and maintain the Register of Social Care Workers. This means social workers have a lot of contact with the Care Council, and we hope that this booklet puts you on the road to a rewarding and fulfilling career.

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ISBN: 978-1-909867-85-7

## **FURTHER COPIES AND OTHER FORMATS**

Further copies of this document are available in large print or other formats, if required.



# PROFESSION

**"You worked tirelessly to solve so many issues for us and honestly, you've made a big difference to our lives."**

Siân Jenkins, service user



**YOU TOO CAN HELP PEOPLE  
MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES.  
CHOOSE SOCIAL WORK**

# WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK?

Social work is about working with people to improve their lives. It's about assessing circumstances, providing support, advice and information to assist people to take control of their lives and make positive changes.

Social workers are professionally trained to support and help a wide range of people experiencing difficulties, including:

### CHILDREN OR ADULTS...

- **in need of support or protection**
- **with mental health problems**
- **with sensory need**
- **with a learning disability or physical disability**
- **affected by alcohol or drugs**
- **who are carers**

Building relationships with individuals, their family, carers and others is central to the social work role. To do this means overcoming barriers to communication such as language differences, disability and emotional difficulties.





Emphasis is placed on ensuring that individuals, families and carers have opportunities to express their views and exercise their rights, when appropriate, at a time when life is most challenging.

As a social worker you would be helping individuals, families and carers to be as independent as possible, whilst protecting them from harm when necessary. This would involve working effectively with other professionals to ensure individuals are protected and receive the right support to meet their needs.

## WORKING WITH...

**health professionals**

**police**

**occupational therapists**

**residential care staff**

**home care workers**

**supported housing workers**

**education services**

**voluntary agencies**





# WHY CHOOSE SOCIAL WORK?

Social work is a varied and challenging career where each working day is different.

You will work with all kinds of people, each with their own unique strengths, needs and hopes for the future. You will perform a variety of different roles, including assessing need, arranging services, safeguarding and helping people to express their views. Most importantly, you will help bring about positive changes to people's lives. It can be difficult work, but it is always worthwhile.

**“Working in any area of social work can be rewarding if you have the right attitude, empathy and sense of social justice, but most importantly, realising that you can only get back what you are prepared to put into your work.”**

Kirk Hawksworth -  
Qualified social worker



# WHO CAN BE A SOCIAL WORKER?



The title 'Social Worker' is protected, meaning that only people with the specific professional qualification can use the title.

To qualify in the UK, an undergraduate degree or Master's degree in social work is needed. Social workers must also be included on the Care Council's Register of Social Care Workers, to ensure they are suitable to practise.

Social work is a people's profession. However, being a good social worker takes more than having an interest in people or gaining the qualification. Social work needs men and women who can help others improve their lives through a combination of knowledge and the right personal attributes and skills.

### **ATTRIBUTES NEEDED:**

- an understanding of social care
- clear thinker
- thorough and efficient
- resilience and determination
- honest and non-judgemental
- considerate and supportive
- ability to make people feel comfortable

### **SKILLS NEEDED:**

- excellent communicator
- ability to work with colleagues and other professions
- ability to make difficult decisions
- can take actions to protect vulnerable people
- can analyse and record information and write reports
- time management whilst working under pressure

As a registered professional you will also be required to abide by the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*.

# **THE SEVEN STEPS TO SOCIAL WORK**

- 1 GAIN SOCIAL CARE EXPERIENCE/  
THE RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS**
- 2 ENROL ONTO THE SOCIAL WORK  
DEGREE/MASTERS**
- 3 ATTEND LECTURES, COMPLETE  
COURSEWORK AND UNDERTAKE  
PRACTICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**
- 4 GRADUATE/QUALIFY**
- 5 REGISTER WITH THE CARE COUNCIL  
AS A QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER**
- 6 FIND A JOB AS A SOCIAL  
WORKER, HELPING  
PEOPLE TO MAKE  
POSITIVE CHANGES**
- 7 CONTINUE TO LEARN,  
DEVELOP AND IMPROVE  
YOUR PRACTICE  
THROUGHOUT  
YOUR CAREER**





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **Q: ARE THERE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE?**

With around 5,500 social workers employed in Wales and demand increasing, plenty of opportunities exist. The majority of newly-qualified social workers get a job within six months of qualifying and starting salaries are competitive. There is scope for progression and promotion once enough experience has been gained, such as becoming a senior practitioner, consultant social worker or team manager.

In Wales, most social workers are employed by local authorities. Opportunities also exist in independent and voluntary organisations which provide a broad range of social care services, from fostering or therapeutic services to drug and alcohol support services.

## **Q: WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED?**

To work as a social worker in the UK, you will need either a degree or Master's degree in social work. These recognised professional qualifications have been established specifically to ensure that trainee social workers are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to fulfil the responsible position they are placed in.

Once qualified, you will need to keep your knowledge and skills up to date. In Wales, there is a Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Framework to support you as you progress in your career.

## **Q: WHAT DOES TRAINING TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER INVOLVE?**

An undergraduate degree is usually a three-year course while the postgraduate degree is undertaken over two years.

The course offers a combination of academic/theoretical study, as well as practical 'hands-on' experience. Whilst training, 200 days of the course will be spent undertaking practice learning, in the form of work-based placements with various social work employers. This provides an opportunity to gain real insight into the role.

## **Q: ARE THERE FLEXIBLE STUDY ROUTES AVAILABLE?**

It is possible to study for the degree over a longer period of time through distance learning (Open University). Whilst this route was previously restricted to students undertaking the course in partnership with an employer, the Open University now offer some places for students undertaking the course independently.

## **Q: ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDY THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH?**

Degree courses offer different opportunities for Welsh-speaking students to learn through the medium of Welsh. All programmes provide for assessment through the Welsh language; the provision of learning that can be undertaken in Welsh varies with one programme delivered entirely in Welsh. Contact your preferred university directly for further information.

## **Q: IS IT POSSIBLE TO UNDERTAKE THE COURSE WITH EMPLOYER SUPPORT?**

Some employers, such as local authorities, may support employees to undertake social work training. The availability of such opportunities can vary across Wales according to demand. Contact the social services department of your local authority to enquire about availability in your area.



## Q: WHERE CAN I TRAIN?

The following universities have received Care Council approval to offer the social work degree/Master's:

### Undergraduate Degree in Social Work:

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**BRIDGEND COLLEGE** - [www.bridgend.ac.uk](http://www.bridgend.ac.uk)

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**CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY** - [www.cardiffmet.ac.uk](http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk)

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**GLYNDŴR UNIVERSITY** - [www.glyndwr.ac.uk](http://www.glyndwr.ac.uk)

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**SWANSEA UNIVERSITY** - [www.swansea.ac.uk](http://www.swansea.ac.uk)

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES, GLAMORGAN** - [www.southwales.ac.uk](http://www.southwales.ac.uk)

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES, NEWPORT** - [www.southwales.ac.uk](http://www.southwales.ac.uk)

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**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY** - [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

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### Master's Degree in Social Work:

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**BANGOR UNIVERSITY** - [www.bangor.ac.uk](http://www.bangor.ac.uk)

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**CARDIFF UNIVERSITY** - [www.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk)

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**SWANSEA UNIVERSITY** - [www.swansea.ac.uk](http://www.swansea.ac.uk)

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## **Q: WHAT ARE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SOCIAL WORK COURSE?**

We recommend that you contact universities directly to check entry requirements, as they can vary slightly from one to another. However all applicants will need to demonstrate an ability to achieve the academic and occupational standards of either the degree or the Master's degree, as well as have:

- relevant social care experience, gained through either paid employment, voluntary work or life experience
- a GCSE (or equivalent) in maths and English
- two A-Levels or equivalent qualifications (if under 21)
- a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly CRB)
- a higher education qualification, if applying for the Master's
- relevant attributes and understanding of the social work field.

## **Q: HOW DO I APPLY FOR SOCIAL WORK TRAINING?**

Applications are made through UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)).

Some applicants will be seeking employer support for their training. In such situations, they will also need to satisfy the employer's internal selection procedure after which their applications will be forwarded to the social work programme for consideration.



## **Q: IS THERE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO QUALIFY AS A SOCIAL WORKER?**

Yes. If you live in Wales, study on an approved social work course in Wales and are not being supported to train, you can apply to the Care Council for:

- a non-income-assessed social work bursary of at least £2,500
- practice learning opportunity allowance

Those studying on a Master's degree course may be eligible for additional income-assessed grants and allowances. Please refer to [www.ccwales.org.uk/student-funding/](http://www.ccwales.org.uk/student-funding/) for further details, as the Social Work Bursary Scheme is reviewed each year and rates may be subject to change. Alternatively, contact the Student Funding and Careers Team at the Care Council on 029 2078 0698 or e-mail [studentfunding@ccwales.org.uk](mailto:studentfunding@ccwales.org.uk).

## **Q: WHY DO I NEED SOCIAL CARE EXPERIENCE?**

Experience ensures that candidates have an awareness of what is needed to work in the field. It is an effective way of finding out about the different opportunities in social work and social care and helps people think about their future career. It also means that you could be making a positive difference to people's lives before starting social work training.



## Q: HOW DO I GAIN EXPERIENCE?

Relevant experience involves engaging with people in need of support or help, and can be gained through paid or voluntary social care work, life experience or a mixture of all three. It doesn't matter if it's gained on a part-time, full-time, or sessional basis, but it must be enough to demonstrate your commitment and interest in social work as a career choice. You can find more information about gaining relevant experience in the careers section of our website.

## EXPERIENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Opportunities for voluntary work may be available within voluntary agencies/charities, community groups and social services departments. Details of voluntary agencies and groups in Wales can be found through the following organisations:

### **WCVA (Wales Council for Voluntary Action)**

Tel: 0800 2888 329

Web: [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)

### **Volunteering Wales**

Web: [www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net)

**More links on our website:**

[www.ccwales.org.uk/career-related-links/](http://www.ccwales.org.uk/career-related-links/)





## EXPERIENCE WHILE IN PAID EMPLOYMENT IN SOCIAL CARE

There are opportunities with local authority social services, voluntary and private social care agencies, such as residential care homes, day centres or family centres. Vacancies are normally advertised in the local press, employer or job search websites and details may also be available from job centres and employment agencies.

## LIFE EXPERIENCE

### SOPHIE'S STORY

"A couple of years ago, I realised that the knowledge and understanding from my experience of being the main carer for my mother, who suffers from a mental illness, could be put to good use. It inspired me to look for a job in the sector, as I knew I would thoroughly enjoy it. My first step was getting a job as an advocacy worker for a local carers group. This allowed me to share my experience with other carers and encouraged me to think about moving on to train professionally as a social worker."

If you have the right attributes, determination and a desire to make a difference to people's lives, you are ready to take the first steps towards a rewarding and fulfilling career, one where you can really **make a difference.**

If you would like more information, or would like to discuss your route into social work, contact:

**Care Council for Wales,**

**7th Floor, South Gate House, Cardiff CF10 1EW**

**Tel: 029 2078 0698 | E-mail: [careers@ccwales.org.uk](mailto:careers@ccwales.org.uk)**

**Minicom: 029 2078 0680 | Web: [www.ccwales.org.uk](http://www.ccwales.org.uk)**

Our website has more information on a career in social work, as well as information on social work bursary funding, social work registration, and contact details for universities and local authorities in Wales.