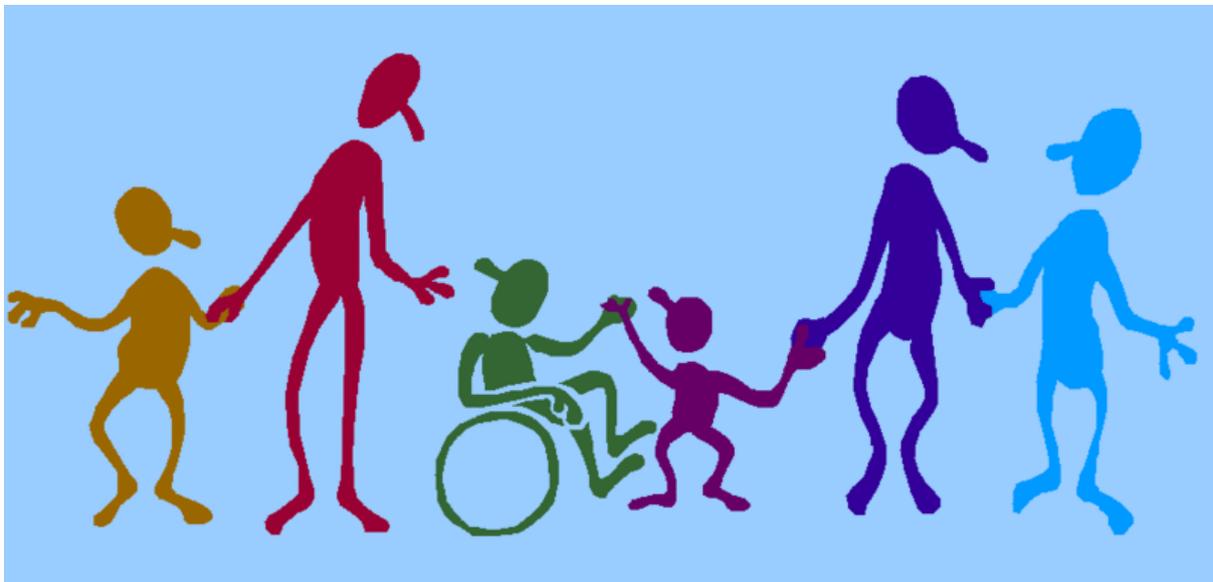


# A Career in Social Care – is it for me?



## Foreword

This resource booklet has been designed to help you to decide if a career in Social Care is an area in which you would like to pursue.

At the beginning of any course, it is important that you have some idea about why the qualification that you will be working towards will have an impact on your vocational journey.

The Health and Social Care (Social Care) course will enable you to progress to university or to employment, towards careers in ***Social Work, Mental Health Nursing***, Support Working, Psychology, Sociology, Counselling, Crime and Probationary Services, Housing Management, ***Youth Work and Community Development***. These careers are specific to the subjects that you will learn about throughout your course. There are several other careers that can be pursued with a qualification in Health and Social Care that are not considered formal social care careers. These include: Teaching in Primary or Secondary Schools; and Disability Studies.

Each of the job titles above may seem quite different, which they are, in many different ways. They each however have *common factors* that require a qualification in Social Care to be able to perform effectively and efficiently within their job role.

**Each job involves:**

- Working with **people**
- Safeguarding **people** from danger, harm and abuse
- Supporting **people** to live as independently as possible

The common word you can see in the list is **PEOPLE**. The careers in Social Care involve working with **PEOPLE**.

How to use this workbook effectively i.e. how to get the **most** out of this resource:

**There are 3 sections in this resource booklet:**

In **section 1**, you will be introduced to several Social Care workers (***Social Worker; Youth and Community Development Worker; and Mental Health Nurse***) who will tell you a little bit about what their role involves. There will be opportunities for you to make some notes about the attributes (skills or qualities) that you believe would be essential to have, to work in this job role effectively and efficiently. A list of possible attributes can be found in section 3 if you're unsure what these are.

In **section 2**, you will be asked to put your thinking cap on, as you make informed choices about the most important attributes that are essential when working in Social Care. The knowledge that you have gained in section 1 will help with the tasks that you will find here.

In **section 3**, a glossary of terms and phrases that have been **highlighted** throughout the booklet can be found. Furthermore, a list of attributes for Social Care can be found; and additional resources and web-links will be found in this section for you to explore in your own time.

## Section 1 – Social Care Workers

Social care workers work with **people** who are facing difficult life circumstances; and who are **vulnerable** and unable to remain safe and independent.

In this section you will gain insight into the roles of the following Social Care Workers:

- Social Worker
- Youth and Community Development Worker
- Mental Health Nurse (Community based)

As you read about what each job role entails, you should make some comments in the spaces provided about the qualities and skills (attributes) that you believe would be essential to be able to provide the best service possible.

“Hi, my name is Jane Woods and I am a Social Worker. I work with children and young people, aged between birth and 18 years; and I work with their parents, siblings and sometimes with members of their extended family too, for example, their aunt or uncle.

My central focus is on the Rights of the Child and how I can help to



keep families together if it's safe to. My role involves listening to the family and the children; and assessing or finding out what **needs** they have and what their issues are. By getting to know and understand what the needs of others are,

only then can I start to think about ways in which my team and I could help them. I always include the family and child in every plan, so that together we can work in partnership. There's nothing more frustrating than someone making decisions for me when I can make them perfectly well by myself. This is why it's so important that I involve the people themselves in decisions about them.

**Note your thoughts so far – skills and qualities?**

A big part of my role is to involve other professional people too, who will help the family or child. Yesterday for example, I had met with the teenager I am currently working with who has been homeless since he was released from custody. As he is still **on licence**, it means that he has certain probationary terms that he must meet in order to live outside of prison. He is currently residing in a hostel, but he has expressed that he would like the chance to live independently in a flat, closer to his family and friends. As part of the service that I provide, it is my **duty** to ensure that his Rights are supported. In our meeting, I invited other professionals along so together we could talk about how this need could be addressed. With the help of his Probationary Officer, Youth and Community Worker, Local Housing Executive Officer and Support Worker, together we talked with the young person about how we could action his request. It may take several weeks for the accommodation move to actually happen, and whilst the young person waits, I will continue to meet with him and explore other aspects of his life that he may need help with, for example, gaining employment.

As well as having a duty to care for this young person in this situation, I also have a duty to protect the public; and that if I felt that this young person was a risk, then I would have a duty to report his actions, which may result in him returning to **custody** or not moving into his new accommodation.

**Note skills and qualities here:**

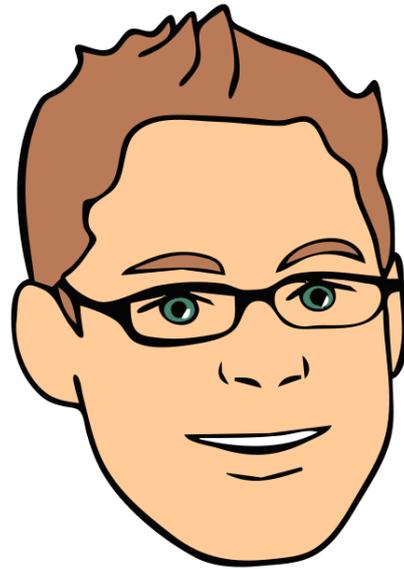
The challenges that are faced by Social Workers daily are diverse, because they involve working with people; people who are individual and unique. It involves supporting people who have experienced **bereavement**, emotional challenges, mental illness, physical disability, abuse, substance misuse...the list is endless.

As a Social Worker for 12 years, I have really enjoyed working with families and children. The job is quite challenging and requires full attention. What I particularly enjoy about it, is getting to know people and getting to see the impact that Social Services can have for each **service user**. It is a rewarding feeling when you know that the help, guidance and planning that you were involved in, has helped to improve the relationships that the service user has with others, but most importantly with themselves; that they can see how valuable they are in society, and they can take actions independently to support themselves.”

**Additional notes – skills and qualities:**

“My name is Ben Uilginham and I have recently qualified as a Youth and Community Development worker.

Having been a member of a youth club as a teenager, I have insight into the needs of the community, the issues that can be faced in **socially disadvantaged** areas and the common complaints made by residents within the area. As a young person growing up, I observed many violent attacks that my friends were involved in, with members from different neighbouring housing estates. It was not uncommon for the fire brigade, ambulance services and the police to be called upon every night during the weekend. Living in a highly populated area, with nothing to do and parents seeking benefits, the likelihood of a ‘storm brewing’ was always on the cards. **Anti-social behaviour** was slowly becoming the norm. Just before it reached its peak, the local council decided to set up a community youth centre, which is where my friends and I went every day after school and throughout the weekends since I was 12 years old.



Note your thoughts so far – skills and qualities?

I remember when it first opened and we were introduced to a Youth and Community worker called Tony. He was full of ideas and positive energy, telling us about the timetable of sports and community events that would be happening over the coming weeks. With an 'open door' policy, I could see, over a period of weeks that the young people who had once had nothing to do, were now getting involved and they appeared to be enjoying themselves. The anti-social behaviour continued but to a lesser degree.

Now, as a newly qualified Youth and Community Development worker, I am working in a socially disadvantaged community in a town that I have been studying in. It's not my local town, but I have learned about the issues that are faced here, including unemployment and substance abuse. Anti-social behaviour is common and quite often police are called out, but they feel that they can't help as much as they would like to. It is my job to reach out and communicate with the young people and to find out what positive changes they would like to see. Through community meetings, I listen to the young people and then take their ideas to Town Council meetings and advocate for them. The timetable of activities has been popular so far and I have encouraged a group of young people to be responsible for the design of a safe timetable for and within the community, so that together we can include everyone, if everyone would like to be included. Activities range from public health, ICT skills, budgeting, careers opportunities; and to sports and team competitions.

Note skills and qualities here:

Quite often I get the chance to work with other professionals including probationary services, police and social services. Together as a team, we share concerns that we have and we talk about the positive strategies that we could put into practice that may help to support the young people in the area to attend the centre; or to get the help that they might need.

I enjoy working in the community and getting to meet and support the people who live there. I enjoy learning about how people have taken **positive risks** to return to education and to start their own career. I enjoy seeing how confident they have become since their attendance at the community centre – it makes me feel that what I do is special and makes an actual difference.”

**Additional notes – skills and qualities:**

“Hi! My name is Zara Scott and I am a Community Mental Health Nurse. I work with adult service users who have been diagnosed with

**chronic** mental illnesses including **schizophrenia** and **depression**.



Working in the community means that I get to visit the service user in their own home and I get to monitor how well they are coping and living independently. A lot of people still think about mental illness negatively, and I am often asked about whether I

think people with schizophrenia, for example, should be allowed to live in their own home. It is frustrating when I am asked this, or when I hear people talking negatively about mental illness. As part of my wider role, outside of providing Nursing and Clinical care to the service users, I am also involved in educating the public about mental illness. Mental illness is quite common and the statistics show upward moving trends – mental illness is becoming more and more common each year. It is important therefore, that the services that are provided by the NHS support people to adapt and to live with mental illness, in their own homes. If there is no risk to others, including themselves, then mental illness should be supported at home.

So what do I do then? I have several roles in the community, but the main one that I have, is to make visits. I visit service users who are managing very well with their mental illness and may require prescriptions to be delivered to them, or injections administered or they may require blood tests to be carried out.

I also visit people to monitor their illness and to report to Social Services, GP, Psychologist or Psychiatrist, of how well they are managing in the community; or I advise of additional services that may help them to maintain community independence.

On home visits, I have to remember that I am a guest and that I can't treat the home as if I lived there. I am not there to clean, tidy up or to make judgement on how people choose to live. It is their home, and if they are safe then that's okay with me. Quite often, service users live with other family members, so when I visit, I also talk with the family member. I have to maintain confidence if I'm asked anything personal and **confidential** about the service user.

Note your thoughts so far – skills and qualities?

Other types of home visits involve the presence of other professionals, including GP and Social Worker. I don't particularly enjoy these visits, as they often involve an **involuntary admission** to mental health institutions. During these visits, my role is to support the family who may be present and to support the service user throughout the process, as quite often they don't want to have to go to hospital. With their best interests in mind, we have a legal and ethical duty to safeguard and protect them - this means that the person needs to spend some time in hospital to receive specialist medical and nursing care.

On the whole, I enjoy Nursing. I enjoy getting out and meeting people and getting a chance to be part of their life. I enjoy learning about what they are interested in, and gaining knowledge in things that I might not be that much into, but they are. It is important to be open and honest when working with people with mental illness. Sometimes their condition can lead them to believe that things are happening when they are not, or vice versa. It is essential therefore to have developed a really good relationship with the person, and as early as possible."

**Additional notes – skills and qualities:**

## Section 2 – Skill and Qualities

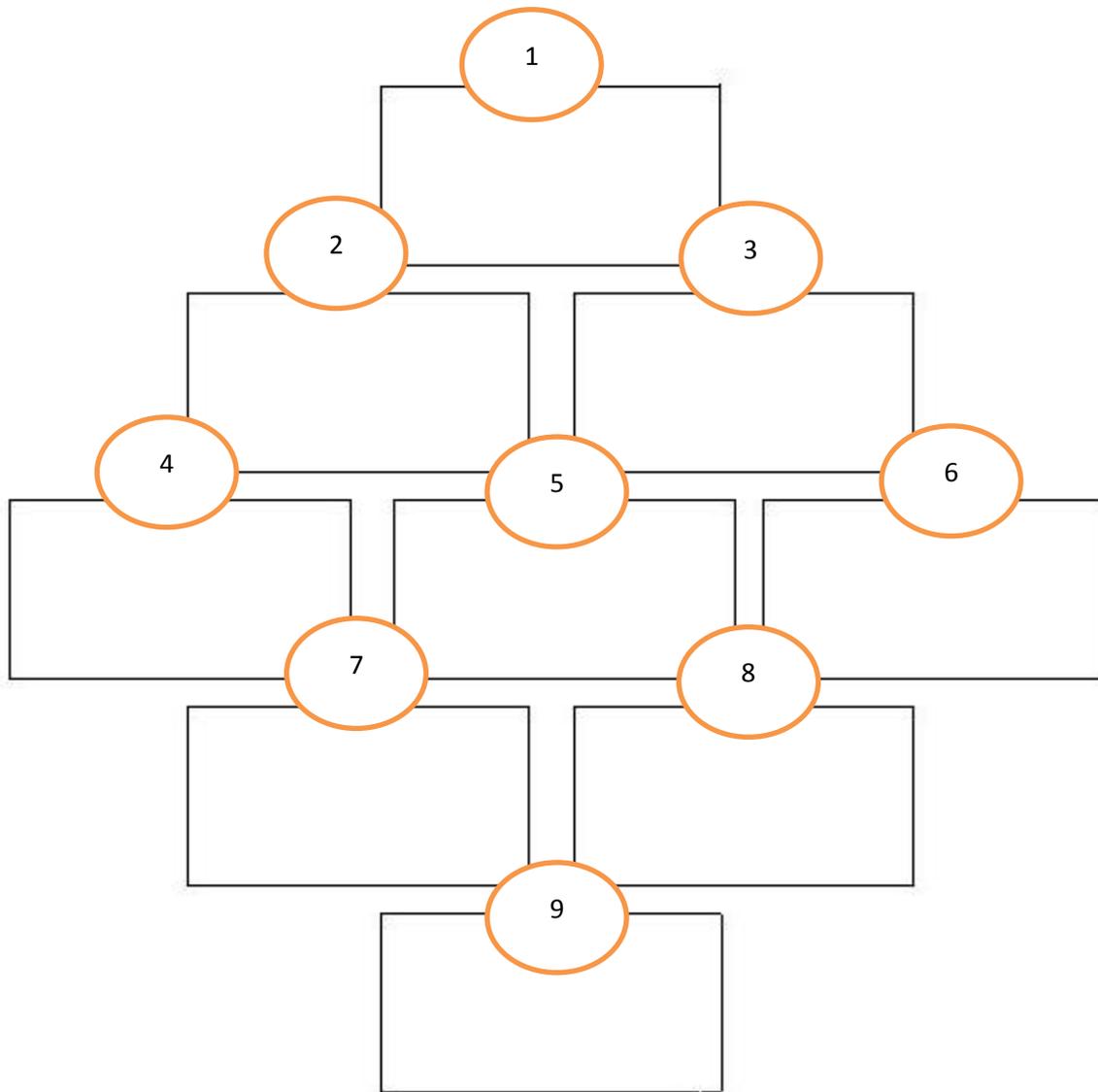
This section is about assessing your learning – it's about collating or putting together the information that you read in each of the case studies and your thoughts on the attributes that would be required to work within each role. By doing so, you should begin to think about what skills or qualities that you have already developed, as well as those that you may need to work on, throughout the duration of your Health and Social Care qualification.

Work through each of the activities set out below to help you reflect on your attributes and those that you need to develop. You should set realistic targets of which you would like to work towards, to develop relevant attributes.

Record in the box below, the common skills and qualities that you have noted among each of the jobs explored:

From your list, **choose 9** which you believe are essential to have as a Social Care worker. Write these here:

Next, place these in order of importance. Use the diamond template below and rank each of the skills or qualities in order of importance. Write the skill or quality in the space provided.



**Reflection activity:**

Think about the top 3 attributes that you have indicated in the diamond template above and complete the tasks below.

Attribute Number 1: \_\_\_\_\_(write it here)

This attribute is the most important because:

An example of when I demonstrated this attribute recently:

How I could develop the strength of this attribute could involve:

Target date:

Attribute Number 2: \_\_\_\_\_(write it here)

This attribute is the second most important because:

An example of when I demonstrated this attribute recently:

How I could develop the strength of this attribute could involve:

Target date:

Attribute Number 3: \_\_\_\_\_(write it here)

This attribute is the third most important because:

An example of when I demonstrated this attribute recently:

How I could develop the strength of this attribute could involve:

Target date:

### Section 3 – Supporting Information

Use this section to support your learning throughout the booklet. In *Part A*, you will find a full glossary of terms and phrases that have been used throughout. A list of attributes that are commonly associated with Social Care can be found in *Part B*. *Part C* includes additional resources that you could use to further support your understanding of the careers in Social Care; the qualifications, and the general requirements for each role.

#### Part A: Glossary of terms and phrases

<b>Terms and Phrases used</b>	<b>Meaning or interpretation</b>
Advocate	To speak up on behalf of someone
Anti-social behaviour	Behaviours that can cause damage and disorder in a community e.g. vandalising, graffiti, substance abuse
Bereavement	When dealing with the passing (death) of someone
Chronic	Continuous or persistent illness
Confidential	In private; usually in relation to sensitive and personal information
Custody (legal)	Legal custody involves the person being placed in prison
Depression	A common mental illness that causes despair, feelings of sadness and loss of interest. A disorder that affects mood.

<b>Terms and Phrases used</b>	<b>Meaning or interpretation</b>
Duty	Health and Social Care workers have a duty to care, protect and safeguard service users from danger, harm and abuse. Duty indicates the legal and ethical requirements within the professional role.
Involuntary admission	Commonly known as ‘sectioned’ among the public body. An involuntary admission is when the service user has been detained in hospital in accordance with the law.
Needs (i.e. Social Care Needs)	Needs include everything that an individual ‘needs’ in order to maintain life, safety and security. Examples include shelter, clothing and food.
‘On licence’	This means to live in the community but still be serving a prison service. Quite often the person would require a tagging device to ensure that probationary restrictions are operating.
‘Open door’ policy	The door is always open i.e. no need for an appointment to see the service provider – just call in.
Positive risk	All actions or omissions have risks, but if opportunities that arise that could lead to more good than harm, then this would indicate a positive risk.

<b>Terms and Phrases used</b>	<b>Meaning or interpretation</b>
Schizophrenia	A long-term mental disorder that involves the withdrawal from reality, distorted perceptions.
Service user	A person who is using services
Socially disadvantaged	Indicates that those from working class or unemployed areas are living together in one community area; and who face similar challenges including poor housing and living conditions. The phrase has more meaning in different cultures and countries.
Vulnerable	The possibility to be attacked, hurt, put in danger, or abused is likely. Those who are considered vulnerable are: older adults; young people; children; and people with mental illness or learning disability.

### Part B: Attributes for Social Care

Empathy	Honesty	Team worker	Leadership
Dedication	Caring	Independent	Management
Persistent	Kindness	Resourceful	Observation
Tolerance	Considerate	Communication	Recording
Respect	Compassion	Active listening	Advocacy
Non-judgemental	Fair	Supportive	Initiative
Organised	Trustworthy	Resilience	Willingness
Patience	Open	Problem-solving	Calmness

### Part C: Additional Resources - websites

<http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.niscc.info/>

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/jobfamily/Pages/socialservices.aspx>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/looking-work/careers-health-and-social-care>