

Family support worker

Family support workers help and advise families with long- or short-term difficulties.

Salary: £18,000 to £50,000 average per year

Hours: 37 per week

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1. Entry requirements

You'll usually need a qualification in childcare, social work, social care, counselling, youth work or education.

Most employers will also want you to have some practical experience. You could get this through paid or voluntary work with children, young people and their families in places like:

- children's homes
- nurseries
- family refuge centres
- probation services
- family community centres
- mental health services
- youth projects

You'll need to pass background checks by the [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#).

2. Skills required

You'll need:

- the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with children and adults
- the ability to build good relationships with families that may be unfriendly at first
- the ability to help parents develop the skills they need to run their home
- a non-judgmental approach
- language skills for some jobs

3. What you'll do

Your job will vary depending on the needs of the family (also known as the client) you're working with. Difficulties facing your clients could include:

- drug or alcohol addiction
- a parent in hospital or prison
- marital or financial difficulties
- a child or parent with a disability
- problems accessing services due to language barriers

You'll work with a social worker to plan and provide the support your client needs, like helping them improve their home management or parenting skills.

You may show parents how things can be done, then support them until they can do these things on their own.

In emergency situations, like when a single parent is going into hospital, you may move into your client's home for a short time to look after the children until other care is found. You may also help social workers assess a family's needs when a child has returned home after being in care.

4. Salary

Starter: £18,000 to £24,000

Experienced: £25,000 to £35,000

Highly Experienced: Up to £50,000 (centre or project managers)

These figures are a guide.

5. Working hours, patterns and environment

You'll usually work around 37 hours a week. You may need to be available early in the morning, during the evening and at weekends.

You'll work with families in their own homes, attend meetings and go into the office to write case notes and consult colleagues.

You may occasionally need to be present in court sessions dealing with care orders for children.

6. Career path and progression

With experience and qualifications you could focus on a particular area, like working with people with disabilities. You could also progress to team leader (managing a group of support workers) or become an assistant manager of a family centre or refuge.

Experience in family support may help if you want to move into social work.

Related careers

You may be interested in:

- [Accommodation warden](#)
- [Foster carer](#)

- [Nanny](#)
- [Education welfare officer](#)