

Social worker

Social workers help to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm or abuse, and support people to live independently.

Salary: £24,000 to £40,000 average per year

Hours: 37 to 40 per week

1. [Entry requirements](#)
 2. [Skills required](#)
 3. [What you'll do](#)
 4. [Salary](#)
 5. [Working hours, patterns and environment](#)
 6. [Career path and progression](#)
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1. Entry requirements

You'll need a degree in social work approved by the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#).

You can study as an undergraduate, which will usually take 3 years full-time. If you've already got a first degree in another subject, you can take a 2 year master's degree in social work. When you qualify, you must also register with the HCPC.

If your degree isn't in social work, and if it's a 2:1 or above, you could apply to a fast-track training route like [Frontline](#), [Think Ahead](#) or [Step Up to Social Work](#).

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

[Skills for Care](#) has more information on careers in social work.

2. Skills required

You'll need:

- excellent communication and listening skills
- the ability to build working relationships with families, groups and professionals
- tact and understanding
- the ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- problem solving and report writing skills
- the ability to make decisions and use your professional judgement
- administration and organisational skills
- IT skills

3. What you'll do

You'll work with a range of people including children, families and vulnerable adults needing protection.

The people you'll support could be homeless children or adults, or people with drug, alcohol or substance misuse problems. In some roles, you might support children and adults with learning disabilities or physical disabilities.

You might also work with:

- people of all ages with mental health problems
- looked after children and young people
- carers and adopters
- older people
- people receiving end of life and palliative care
- people in prison with social care needs
- young offenders
- refugees and asylum seekers
- people at risk of abuse and neglect or who have been abused or neglected
- victims of domestic violence

You'll provide help and support to improve people's lives. You may visit people in their homes to look at their needs and build relationships with them. Your day-to-day tasks may include:

- offering information and counselling
- putting together support plans
- keeping records and writing reports
- working with other professionals
- supervising team members
- attending court
- discussing your cases through regular supervision

4. Salary

Starter: £24,000 (newly qualified)

Experienced: up to £40,000

A newly qualified social worker could expect to earn £24,000 per annum. This could rise to £40,000 per annum for an experienced social worker depending on their location.

These figures are a guide.

5. Working hours, patterns and environment

You'll usually work office hours or on a rota. You may work shifts, including nights, or be on call.

You may work in an office. Most offices operate a hot-desk system where you'll be expected to work flexibly.

You may visit people in their homes. You could also work in a hospital or in a day, health or residential centre.

6. Career path and progression

During your first year in work your employer may offer the [Assessed and Supported Year in Employment \(ASYE\)](#). This includes extra support like:

- regular supervision
- a training and development plan
- time to meet your training and development needs

You'll need to pass your ASYE in the first 12 months of being employed so that you can get your fitness to practice certificate.

When you've completed your ASYE, you'll be given a training pathway to keep your skills current and to help you progress. Each local authority will have a career pathway, with some offering the chance to study for an MA in Advanced Professional Practice.

With experience, you'll usually find opportunities to progress into management, research or study for a PhD. You could also become a practice educator and train and mentor students from your partner university.

Related careers

You may be interested in:

- [Foster carer](#)
- [Drug and alcohol worker](#)
- [Family mediator](#)
- [Family support worker](#)
- [Probation officer](#)