Social Work Assistant

Introduction

Social work assistants (SWAs) usually work for social services departments of local authorities. They work with people who, for a variety of reasons, need help or support. SWAs complement the work of social workers.

Also known as

- Assistant Social Worker

Work Activities

Social Work Assistants have many different types of areas they work in. Areas of work could include:

- children and families
- adult community care
- hospital care
- mental health
- helping people who suffer from a disability

As a Social Work Assistant, you will have a number of people who are you responsible for. These are generally less complex cases compared to qualified Social Workers.

You would firstly meet with the client and see how they need your help. At the first meeting, you will probably give advice and also put together a plan for the future on how the needs of the clients are going to be met.

The day-to-day work varies according to the needs of clients. Tasks might include:

- assessing parenting skills and planning help, where necessary
- helping with children's learning and development
- planning the social care needed for someone leaving hospital
- preventing problems escalating, or new problems arising

Social Work Assistants usually help their clients improve their situations that they are in. You will use your knowledge of local resources to help clients achieve their goals.

As part of your administrative role, you will be keeping accurate records as you may have to present your findings as part of a course case. You will also put together statistical information on performance as well as answering phone calls.

You will receive regular supervision from your Manager or Supervisor.

Some Social Work Assistants work during evenings or at the weekend. Local travel is usually a significant part of this job.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Social Work Assistant, you need to:
• listen carefully and empathise when necessary
• ask the right questions to find out about clients' needs
• gain the trust of people from all kinds of backgrounds
• be flexible and adaptable
• assess needs and circumstances
• communicate clearly, both orally and in writing
• gather, analyse and understand information
• be non-judgemental and avoid imposing solutions
• work through conflict sensitively and come up with effective solutions
• work well under pressure
• have a positive attitude when you are faced with difficulties
• make difficult decisions at times

Travel throughout the local area is usual, therefore a full driving licence can be a requirement of the job.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate:

• Starting: £19,000 - £20,500
• With experience: £22,000 - £24,500
• Senior Social Work Assistants earn £26,000 - £28,000

Hours of work

Social Work Assistants typically work 37 hours a week. Shift work, early starts and late finishes are usual in some posts. Some employers offer flexitime working, and part-time and temporary work is also possible.

Where could I work?

Opportunities for Social Work Assistants occur in community and residential settings throughout the UK.

Employers include the NHS (in hospitals and in the community), local authority social services departments, residential care homes, housing associations and voluntary organisations (such as charities).

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local newspapers, on employers' websites, at Jobcentre Plus and on the Find a Job website.

Vacancies are also advertised on job boards, such as:

• jobs.gopublic.com
• communitycarejobs
• NHS Health Careers

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

In this role you may be required to complete a care certificate before starting work. Take a look at our information article ‘care certificate’ for more information.

You can become a Social Work Assistant with A levels. Having at least one A level in a relevant subject such as health and social care would be useful for this career.
You not necessarily need a degree to become a Social Work Assistant. However, having a degree will give you more experience and a better qualification.

An Intermediate Level Apprenticeship in health and social care will be useful to get into this career. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

**Training**

Your experience will usually need to be from a paid position, but voluntary work may also be taken into consideration.

Employers are also likely to require you to have some knowledge of relevant laws relating to the area of social care you want to work in.

Once employed, you will usually receive training. This will be in areas relevant to the area you work within, such as child protection, drug and alcohol misuse or legal issues.

You may also be asked to take a DBS check.

An access course in health and social care could be helpful for this career.

**Work Experience**

This is an area of work where experience of working with people in need is important; two years' experience is a usual requirement.

**Progression**

Many Social Work Assistants go into the job as a route to a career as a qualified Social Worker, studying for the degree in social work while working as a Social Work Assistant.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act**

This career is an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to. This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

**Qualifications**

Most successful entrants have a relevant level 3 qualification.

Relevant BTEC level 2 and level 3 qualifications are available and include:

- inducing others in the assisting and moving of individuals in social care
- supporting activity provision in social care
- activity provision in social care
- assisting and moving individuals for social care settings
- induction into adult social care in Northern Ireland
- health and social care
- preparing to work in adult social care
- supporting individuals with learning disabilities

City and Guilds also offer various level 2 and 3 qualifications in areas that will help you to stand out from the crowd:

- food safety and nutrition in health and social care and early years and childcare settings
- preparing to work in adult social care
- induction into adult social care
- health and social care (level 1)
For many posts, you will need a full, clean driving licence.

To get onto an Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you’ll usually need 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, including English and maths, or to have completed an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**  
  National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)  
  Tel: 0800 015 0400  
  Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk  
  Website: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

- **LGjobs**  
  Local government vacancies  
  Website: [www.lgjobs.com](http://www.lgjobs.com)

- **myjobscotland: Scottish local government vacancies**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Email: myjobscotland@cosla.gov.uk  
  Website: [www.myjobscotland.gov.uk](http://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk)

- **Open University (OU)**  
  Tel: 0845 3006090  
  Website: [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

- **Skills for Care & Development (SfC&D)**  
  Skills for social work, social care and children's services  
  Address: 2nd floor, Westgate, 6 Grace Street, Leeds LS1 2RP  
  Tel: 0113 2411240  
  Email: sscinfo@skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk  
  Website: [www.skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk)

- **Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)**  
  Scottish enquiries  
  Address: Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY  
  Tel: 0845 6030891  
  Email: enquiries@sssc.uk.com  
  Website: [www.sssc.uk.com](http://www.sssc.uk.com)

- **Aquestion Of Care**  
  This site is a 'Skills for Care and Development' initiative  
  Website: [www.caringcareers.org.uk](http://www.caringcareers.org.uk)

- **Compass Guide: The annual guide to social work and social care**  
  Publisher: Compass Career Opportunities Ltd  
  Address: The Barn, St James' Square, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6AP  
  Tel: 01892 784804  
  Email: admin@compassjobsfair.com  
  Website: [www.compassjobsfair.com/Compass-Guide](http://www.compassjobsfair.com/Compass-Guide)

- **Guardian Society**  
  Website: [www.guardian.co.uk/society](http://www.guardian.co.uk/society)

- **British Association of Social Workers (BASW)**  
  Address: 16 Kent Street, Birmingham B5 6RD  
  Tel: 0121 6223911  
  Email: england@basw.co.uk  
  Website: [www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)
• **British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Scotland**
  Scottish enquiries
  Address: Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RG
  Tel: 0131 2219445
  Email: scotland@basw.co.uk
  Website: [www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)

• **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
  Tel: 0800 028 4844
  Website: [ams.careerswales.com/](http://ams.careerswales.com/)

• **Welsh Local Government Careers**
  Website: [www.lgcareerswales.org.uk/](http://www.lgcareerswales.org.uk/)

• **Social Care Wales**
  Address: South Gate House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1EW
  Tel: 0300 30 33 444
  Email: info@ccwales.org.uk
  Website: [www.ccwales.org.uk](http://www.ccwales.org.uk)

• **People Exchange Cymru (PEC)**
  Public sector recruitment portal for Wales
  Email: peopleexchangecymru@gov.wales
  Website: [www.peopleexchangecymru.org.uk/home](http://www.peopleexchangecymru.org.uk/home)

**Related Careers**

- Care Assistant - Children
- Care Assistant - Older People
- Community Worker
- Home Care Assistant
- Family Support Worker
- Parents' Help
- Nanny
- Assistant Psychologist
- Probation Officer
- Field Social Worker
- Residential Social Worker
- Careers Adviser
- Personal Adviser
- Clinical Psychologist
- Educational Psychologist
- Occupational Psychologist
- Rehabilitation Worker - Visual Impairment
- Medical Social Worker
- Social Worker - Mental Health
- Youth Worker
- Home Care Organiser
- Advice Centre Worker
- Charity Fundraiser
- Childminder
- Counsellor
- Adult Guidance Worker
- Psychotherapist
- Trade Union Officer
- Welfare Rights Worker
- Probation Service Officer
- Care Assistant
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Religious Leader
- Care Home Manager
• Donor Carer
• Caseworker
• Youth Support Worker