Playworker

Introduction

Playworkers provide stimulating play opportunities to encourage children to learn, develop and express themselves. They set up safe and creative play areas.

Playworkers work in a variety of settings, including play centres, adventure playgrounds, mobile play buses, holiday playschemes and hospitals.

Work Activities

Your role as a Playworker is to guide and support play, making sure that it is fun, creative and safe. You will usually work with children aged between 4 and 16 years of age, or you may specialise in a particular age group.

Play encourages children's concentration, creativity, imagination, ability to solve problems, general sense of discovery and many other skills and qualities.

Play activities include games, arts and crafts, drama, swimming, and outdoor trips. As a Playworker, you will help children to make friends, learn new skills, develop as individuals and work together in teams - important lifeskills.

You will provide stimulating play opportunities to encourage children to learn, develop and express themselves. You will also have to set up and look after materials and resources, and make sure children are safely and comfortably equipped to do an activity.

You must report any changes in a child’s habits or behaviour, for example, if they are unusually quiet or seem to be off their food.

In hospitals, play is recognised as very important to the treatment of sick children. It helps children take their mind off their illness, deal with stress and anxiety, and feel more comfortable with Nurses and Doctors.

Babies and very young children in special care units and general wards also benefit from play. You will use resources such as mirrors, colourful mobiles, toys and music.

You might also have to do administrative tasks, such as keeping records, writing reports and looking after petty cash. You may also help to recruit and train new staff.

Some Playworkers progress to act as Senior Playworkers or Managers, dealing with paperwork and looking after staff and resources, usually on larger sites or for a play service in a local authority.

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 Playworker, you need:

- stamina and a lot of energy
- patience and tolerance
- a sense of fun
- creativity and imagination
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- an understanding of the importance of play to children's physical, social and emotional development

This work involves physical activity, so you must be reasonably fit.
Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £15,000
- With experience: £16,000 - £17,500
- Senior Playworkers earn £19,000

Part-time Playworkers can expect to earn in the range £7 - £11 per hour.

Hours of work

Working hours for Playworkers vary. Full-time Playworkers work 35-39 hours a week. In the NHS they also work weekends on a rota basis. Other employers require 'out-of-school hours' working. Part-time and temporary jobs are also available.

Where could I work?

Opportunities for Playworkers occur throughout the UK.

Local authorities employ around 1,700 Playworkers throughout the country to work in play centres, play buses, summer schemes, adventure playgrounds, community projects and after-school clubs.

In the NHS, playworkers are known as hospital play specialists. Children's hospitals have large play departments employing up to 40 hospital play specialists each. In general hospitals small teams of play staff work in different areas of the hospital.

There are also opportunities in the private sector, and as a voluntary Playworker.

Where are vacancies advertised?

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

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes

You'll usually need to have a childcare qualification to get into this career at entry level, though there are no strict requirements. Some people start off on a voluntary or temporary basis - on a summer play scheme, for example.

You might be able to start as an Assistant Playworker, and work your way up.

For a higher level position, you'll usually need to have gained a more specific playwork qualification.

An Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship is also great place to start. You may be able to take a vocational qualification, such as an NVQ, as part of your apprenticeship.

Awards, certificates and diplomas in playwork are available, at levels 2 and level 3.

Training

If you would like some training, the CACHE (Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education) offer a level 3 certificate in playwork. The units you could be studying include:

- understanding playwork principles
- understanding how to safeguard the well-being of children and young people
- understanding health, safety and security in the play environment
- understanding how to plan for and support children and young people's self-directed play
Check the website for dates and availability.

Other courses could be available in your area.

**Work Experience**

Previous experience working with children who have different age ranges would be really useful for this career.

**Progression**

CACHE offers playwork-related qualifications at levels 4 and 5. A small number of degree and foundation degree qualifications in playwork are also available. You might be able to become the Senior Playworker, in charge of a team of Playworkers and Assistant Playworkers.

**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**

There is no strict requirement for playworkers to be qualified. In practice, however, you tend to hold a relevant childcare or playwork qualification.

To get onto an Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, possibly including English and maths.

Some people start on a voluntary or temporary basis, and work towards vocational qualifications, such as:

- BTEC level 3 - induction to playwork
- BTEC level 3 - transition to playwork
- BTEC level 2 - playwork
- BTEC level 2 and level 3 - children's care, learning and development
- City & Guilds level 2 and level 3 - playwork

To enter a City & Guilds or BTEC level 2 course, you'll usually need at least 4 GCSEs at grades D-G (3-1).

To enter a City & Guilds or BTEC level 3 course, you'll usually need at least 4 GCSEs at grades A*-C (9-4).

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

**Training**

Intermediate and Advanced Level Apprenticeships in playwork may be available in your area.

**Courses**

Colleges usually consider adult candidates who don't have the regular entry requirements. Check the admissions policy of the college that runs the course you're interested in.

The Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE) offers a suite of relevant childcare courses, which can be studied on a full-time, part-time, weekend, work-based or open learning basis. A list of training providers is
available from the CACHE website.

Relevant BTEC and City & Guilds qualifications are available at some colleges by part-time study.

**Further Information**

Professional institutions have the following roles:

- To support their members.
- To protect the public by keeping standards high in their professions.

For more information on the institution(s) relevant to this career, check out the contacts section.

**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)

- **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
  Tel: 0800 9178000
  Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
  Website: [www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships)

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

- **SkillsActive**
  Tel: 020 7632 2000
  Website: [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)

- **Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE)**
  Address: Apex House, 81 Camp Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 5GB
  Tel: 0845 3472123
  Email: info@cache.org.uk
  Website: [www.cache.org.uk](http://www.cache.org.uk)

- **The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY)**
  Address: Royal Court, 81 Tweedys Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 1TG
  Tel: 0845 8800044
  Email: info@pacey.org.uk
  Website: [www.pacey.org.uk](http://www.pacey.org.uk)

- **National Children’s Bureau (NCB)**
  Address: 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE
  Tel: 020 7843 6000
  Email: enquiries@ncb.org.uk
  Website: [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

- **Early Years**
  Irish enquiries
  Address: 6c Wildflower Way, Apollo Road, Boucher Road, Belfast BT12 6TA
  Tel: 028 9066 2825
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

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

Aquestion Of Care
This site is a 'Skills for Care and Development' initiative
Website: www.caringcareers.org.uk

Children & Young People Now
Publisher: National Youth Agency (NYA)
Website: www.cypnow.co.uk

Guardian Society
Website: www.guardian.co.uk/society

Association for Physical Education (afPE)
Tel: 01905 855584
Email: enquiries@afpe.org.uk
Website: www.afpe.org.uk

Play Scotland
Scottish enquiries
Address: Midlothian Innovation Centre, Pentlandfield, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9RE
Tel: 0131 4409070
Email: info@playscotland.org
Website: www.playscotland.org

Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA)
Scottish enquiries
Address: 21-23 Granville Street, Glasgow G3 7EE
Tel: 0141 2214148
Email: info@sppa.org.uk
Website: www.sppa.org.uk

Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers
- Nursery Nurse
- NVQ Assessor
- School Lunchtime Supervisor
- History Teacher
- Geography Teacher
- Modern Foreign Languages Teacher
- Teaching Assistant
- Music Teacher
• English Teacher
• Maths Teacher
• Science Teacher
• Education Welfare Officer
• Special Educational Needs Teacher
• Art and Design Teacher
• Design and Technology Teacher
• Early Years Teacher
• Physical Education Teacher
• Primary Teacher
• Secondary Teacher
• Training Manager
• Higher Education (HE) Lecturer
• School Business Manager
• Teacher of English as a Foreign Language
• Lecturer
• Teacher
• Welsh Teacher
• Nursery Assistant
• Headteacher