

# A career as a social worker

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



**Social workers work with individuals, families and communities to help improve people's lives. This may be helping to protect vulnerable people from harm or abuse or supporting people to live independently. Social workers often work in multi-disciplinary teams alongside health, education and other professionals.**

## QUALIFICATIONS

---

**To become a social worker you need to take a Degree in Social Work. This can either be at undergraduate level, or if people have a degree in another subject a two year masters degree in social work. You apply for social work courses via UCAS ([www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch)).**

Social work degrees are popular and it is unlikely that you would be accepted on a course straight from school unless you have done an exceptional amount of relevant paid or voluntary work. The majority of people on social work courses have at least one years' experience in work before starting the degree course and many entrants have much more. Examples of the sort of work experience that people have include: work as a social care worker or support worker, youth work, play work, working with offenders, advocacy work etc. This experience may be obtained in the UK or abroad. The 'A' level grade requirements vary from university to university, but you must be able to demonstrate that you will be able to do the academic and the applied part of the courses. Universities also take into account your life and work experience. You will be interviewed for a place if you meet the criteria for entry and this will include an assessment of your inter-personal skills and your emotional maturity and resilience. There are [bursaries](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/825.aspx) ([www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/825.aspx](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/825.aspx)) available at present to cover some living costs. These are not available for year 1 of the undergraduate degree. There are also in England three fast track schemes for graduates wanting to become social workers.

They are called 'Step up', 'Front line' and 'Think Ahead'. These courses are hard to get onto. You would receive funding from the Government for these routes.

On the degree courses you spend nearly half your time on placements. That is time spent working in organisations that provide a social work or similar service. Balancing this work, with academic work is challenging.

The degree covers work with both adults and children. After graduation people tend to specialise in either working with adults or children and families.



## A DEMANDING BUT SATISFYING CAREER

---

Social work is a demanding job, employs a multitude of skills but can be very satisfying. The sense of achievement of making a positive impact on people's lives is tangible, whether this means having helped keep a family together, enabling someone with a disability or mental health problem to lead a more independent life, or having protected a vulnerable child or adult from harm.





## EMPLOYMENT

---

**Many social workers work for local authorities, or joint local authority and health organisations. Others work in the voluntary and private sector. A social work degree is a very recognised qualification in the voluntary sector, with many social workers working for national or local voluntary organisations as managers, project workers, working with communities etc.**

## A GREAT PROFESSION

---

**Social work has a long history and is an international profession and a social work degree from the UK would enable you to work in many parts of the world.**

Social workers on qualifying need to register as social workers with the Health and Social Care Professions Council, this is to protect the public. Social workers must have a commitment to continuous professional development and are encouraged to take post-qualification courses and qualifications.

BASW is the professional organisation to support social workers and social work students. It has been providing this support for 46 years. Student members get a special rate and the fee covers insurance costs, advice and representation and access to free or very low cost events.



**You can find more information about social work on the BASW website –  
[www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)  
or Facebook – [www.facebook.com/BASW.UK](https://www.facebook.com/BASW.UK)  
or you can follow or ask questions on twitter – [https://twitter.com/basw\\_uk](https://twitter.com/basw_uk)**

The British Association of Social Workers  
**[www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)**