

Myths

Realities

Social care is all about working in a residential home with elderly people...

There is the option of working with a number of different client groups - those with learning or physical disabilities, the elderly, people with mental health needs or those with drug and alcohol dependencies.

Social care is delivered in a range of settings - providing the opportunity to experience working in different environments such as day centres, residential homes, supported housing, hospices or clients' own homes.

The pay in social care is poor...

The starting salary is around £12,000 to £16,000 p/a. With experience, qualifications and extra responsibilities it can rise to between £18,000 and £21,000. You'll be encouraged to develop new skills and gain qualifications that can take you into more senior roles as your experience grows - giving you the opportunity to increase your earnings. The starting salary for a registered manager is around £20,000 to £30,000 p/a and with several years' experience, could rise to around £40,000. In some cases, free or subsidised accommodation is provided. Certain shifts may have a higher hourly rate.

Social care is a dead-end job with no training and development opportunities...

There are ample opportunities for training and development, be it short courses in a topic relevant to your role or management and degree level qualifications. Many of the courses you will have the option of completing are work-based.

There are also plenty of opportunities for progression. You can become a team leader, manager or director, or go on to complete a social work or nursing degree. Working in social care can also lead you into roles in health, education and housing.

There are a limited choice of jobs...

There are many different job roles that can be undertaken in care. Examples are: Personal Assistant, Support Worker, Activities Co-ordinator, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist and Mental Health Support Worker. As well as direct care you can take on roles in human resources, training, commissioning and administration.

Jobs in social care are not secure...

The sector offers good long-term employment prospects - the number of people with a care need is to grow significantly over the next decade - so jobs will always be available. The number of jobs in adult social care in England in 2011 was estimated at 1.85 million. An estimated 1.63 million people were doing these jobs. The number of jobs in adult social care is projected to grow by between 24% and 82% between 2010 and 2025. This means there could be between 2.1 million and 3.1 million jobs by 2025.

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Social care is not a worthwhile career...

Social care is about helping people with their lives and supporting them to maintain their independence, dignity and control. You can gain an enormous sense of personal achievement from knowing that your job is helping people. In a recent survey of care workers, 96% said they felt that their work really makes a real difference.

Employers won't be interested in me as I don't have any relevant qualifications...

You do not always need formal qualifications before beginning a career in social care - often your attitude and life experiences are more important. As you work you will develop new skills and there will be plenty of great learning and development opportunities that can lead to qualifications

Working in care means unsociable hours...

Many jobs offer flexible hours. You could choose to work part time or have a full time career to fit around family or other commitments. The National Survey of Care Workers reported that flexibility was the second most chosen reason for people starting in the sector.

You have to have a car to work in homecare...

Travel is an integral part of being a homecare worker. However, you don't have to have a car. In lots of areas you can use public transport, walk or cycle to get to your clients.