

What is Social Work?

- Social work provides practical and emotional support for people to help them manage the impact of disability, illness or ageing.
- Social work supports families and individuals where there is risk to the safety or wellbeing of children or vulnerable adults.
- Social work helps people to change their lives.
- Social work advocates for and protects vulnerable children, young people and adults.



Who are Social Workers?

- They are professionally qualified people who work with a range of individuals, children, young people, families, groups and communities.
- They are people who assess, plan and implement packages of care and protection to meet identified social needs.
- They are people who build relationships and encourage independence.
- They are people who are patient, understanding, empathetic, sensitive, non-judgemental and resilient.
- They are people who sometimes have to make difficult decisions, such as taking children into care.
- They are men and women who are confident, motivated team-workers.



Who employs Social Workers?

There are over 6,000 social workers in Northern Ireland. Employers recruit social workers into a range of areas across the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

In Northern Ireland, the Health and Social Care Trusts are the main statutory employers for social workers but there are also job opportunities available within the criminal justice and education sectors. You could work in Probation, Education Welfare, the Voluntary Sector, Youth Justice and in specialist settings such as; addiction services, fostering and adoption care.

Do I need to register with NISCC?

Yes! All social workers and social work students must be registered with NISCC. NISCC registers all social workers and social work students to ensure they meet the [NISCC Standards of Conduct and Practice](http://www.niscc.info). (See www.niscc.info for more information).

What does Social Work offer?

- A **flexible career** with a huge range of jobs from which to choose.
- A job that makes a **difference** to the quality of life of the people with whom you work.
- **Career progression:** With experience, social workers can progress to team leader / senior social worker posts, to specialist practice and management roles.
- **Salary:** As a newly qualified social worker, you can expect to earn an annual salary starting at just over £22,128 (Band 5) progressing to £26,565 (Band 6-statutory sector only) once you have completed your first year in employment. This year is known as the **Assessed Year in Employment (AYE)** which you must complete successfully before you become a fully registered social worker. (For more details on AYE go to the NISCC website at www.niscc.info)
- **Learning and Development:** Social workers must update their skills and learning throughout their career. The recognised framework for post qualifying learning and development is known as the **PIP (Professional in Practice) Framework** and all NISCC registered social workers are expected to achieve credits via this framework following successful completion of the AYE. (For more information on PIP, go to the NISCC website)

How do I become a Social Worker?

The Honours Degree (the Degree) in Social Work is the recognised professional qualification for all social workers in the UK as well as for Probation Officers and Education Officers in Northern Ireland (NI) and Criminal Justice Social Workers in Scotland.

In NI, the Degree is available on a full time basis. There are two full-time routes as follows:

- **3 Year Undergraduate Route (UGR)**
- **2 Year Relevant Graduate Route (RGR)**

The RGR route is for those who already hold a relevant honours degree (2:1 or higher), such as sociology, psychology, law, teaching and early childhood studies or other cognate subjects*.

*Applicants should check with the university prior to submitting their application to confirm their honours degree is relevant.

Where would I study?

In Northern Ireland you can study for the Honours Degree in Social Work at:

- **Queen's University Belfast (QUB)** - (UGR/RGR)
- **Ulster University at Magee Campus (UUM)** - (UGR/RGR)
- **Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)** - (UGR only)
- **South West College (SWC)** - (UGR only)

The third year of the undergraduate route (UGR) provided by BMC and SWC - is undertaken at UUM.

All applications to the Degree are made through the UCAS online system at www.ucas.com This includes applications to the BMC and SWC and to the RGR.

What are the entry requirements?

To be eligible for entry to the Degree, applicants must demonstrate that they have the potential to train to be a social worker at degree level – this means you must:

- **Meet the academic entry requirements set by your chosen provider.**
- **Pass a suitability interview.**
- **Be registered as a social work student with NISCC.**

All applicants should check with the provider directly to confirm entry requirements for that year. (See useful websites to find out more).

When applying to the Degree you must be able to provide evidence that you understand what is involved in working in social work. This will help you in your suitability interview and can be gained through life experience, voluntary or paid work. This type of experience can also help you decide if social work is the right career for you and you are the right person to become a social worker.

How to find out more

You can find out more from the NISCC website at: www.niscc.info/careers

Other useful websites:

- www.nidswp.net
- www.qub.ac.uk
- www.ulster.ac.uk
- www.belfastmet.ac.uk
- www.swc.ac.uk
- www.ucas.co.uk
- www.health-ni.gov.uk
- www.basw.co.uk
- www.nipsa.org.uk
- www.scie.org.uk

Or test your suitability to work in the care sector via the **A Question of Care – A Career for You** (AQCCY) online website at: www.aquestionofcare.org.uk



The **AQCCY** website tests if you have the right value base to work in the care sector – values that are required for working in social work and social care.

See also the **Meet NISCC Ambassadors** on the NISCC website at: www.niscc.info to hear from NI Social Worker Ambassadors