

Care Assistant or Support Worker

Care assistants, sometimes referred to as support workers or care workers, help people who need assistance with their personal care or daily activities. This can be within peoples' homes, day centres or residential or nursing homes.

The Work

You could be:

- helping with physical tasks and giving social and emotional support
- helping people to live more independently in their community
- caring for children with additional needs or behavioural problems
- helping people with personal care and befriending them, such as listening to their concerns and discussing any worries
- helping people with household tasks such as laundry, ironing, cooking and cleaning
- going shopping and helping with financial tasks, such as paying bills and claiming benefits
- arranging social events and activities
- reporting any changes in health or behaviour in the people you care for
- helping draw up, and review, care plans for your clients.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £8.00 an hour for workers under 18, £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour.

With experience and shift allowances you could earn around £18.00 an hour.

The apprentice rate, for those aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship, is £8.00 an hour (1 April 2026). Some employers pay their apprentices more than the minimum rate.

Conditions

- You could work with children, people with physical or learning disabilities, or older people.
- You may work in a residential or nursing home, a day centre or in people's own homes.
- You might have to wear protective clothing.
- There might be some lifting of older people, or people with a disability.

- You are likely to have to work shifts including some evenings and weekends.
- If you work in a residential home, you may sometimes have to sleep overnight, or even live-in.
- You can often get part time work.

Getting In

- You must have, or have the ability to work towards SVQ Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 6, to meet the requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration.
- Some employers may ask for a NQ or NC in a care discipline – some courses may ask for some subjects at National 4 or 5.
- You could enter through a Modern Apprenticeship in Social Services and Healthcare. You would need at least 3 subjects at National 4 including English and Maths.
- You must be fit, as you may have to lift, bathe and help older people or people with a disability move around.
- It helps if you have a driving licence – for some jobs this is essential.
- It is also useful to have done some voluntary work in a caring environment.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- caring and understanding
- friendly, cheerful, patient and tolerant
- a good listener
- positive and adaptable
- willing to help people unable to care for themselves
- willing to help clients to be independent
- able to cope with difficult situations – you may need to calm clients who are upset
- aware of basic health and hygiene rules
- sensible and practical.

Training

- Training is on the job including courses in moving and handling, first aid and infection control.
- Care workers must achieve SSSC Registration within 6 months of taking up employment. Relevant qualifications for registration include SVQ Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 6, or HNC Social Services.
- You may go on to study for SVQ Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 7.
- You will do short courses to keep up to date with new laws affecting support workers.

Getting On

- With experience and further training, such as SVQ Care Services Leadership and Management at SCQF Level 10, you may be able become a senior care assistant, supervisor or a senior manager (for example

see [Care Home Manager](#)).

- You could go on to take further qualifications to become a social worker (see [Social Worker](#)) or a nurse (see [Nurse – Registered](#)).

More Information

There is a steady demand for support workers which is likely to continue. You should note that a lot of jobs are part time.

Contacts

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

Tel: 0345 60 30 891

Website: www.sssc.uk.com

Website (2): learn.sssc.uk.com/careers

X: [@SSSCnews](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thesssc

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.