Social Worker

Social workers safeguard the needs of vulnerable people who may be at risk from harm or abuse, or have social and emotional problems. They provide support and organise social services to enable people to improve their lives or become more independent.

The Work

There are two main types of social worker:

- **field social worker** – works in the community, hospitals, day centres, schools and clients' homes
- **residential social worker** – works in residential accommodation for a variety of people needing care.

As either a field or residential social worker you might work with adults, children and families, older people, people with disabilities or mental health problems, offenders or those with addiction problems. In all cases you could be:

- building up a trusting relationship with your clients
- investigating individual cases, collecting relevant information, checking facts, interpreting data and making appropriate (possibly unpopular) decisions
- asking for guidance from your supervisor in difficult cases
- reviewing cases in the light of changing circumstances
- working in partnership with users and carers to decide on best services for the client
- working closely with other agencies to provide services
- keeping written records of all interviews and prepare reports.

Depending on your clients you could be:

- deciding if children are at risk, arranging protection for them, monitoring them regularly, perhaps removing them from the care of their parents or carers and arranging foster homes or adoption
- assessing the needs of older people and arranging social services
- assessing needs of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities, and arranging residential or nursing home care if needed
- helping people with physical disabilities integrate into the community
- keeping in contact with offenders who are on community based sentences and monitoring their behaviour
- setting up or running rehabilitation programmes for people with drug or alcohol problems
- assisting the needs of all carers to continue in their caring role by arranging short breaks or other relevant support.

Pay

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

- where you work
- the company or organisation you work for

- the demand for the job.

Salaries for social workers in Scotland vary depending on the local authority you work for. Starting salaries for qualified social workers are around £31,000 a year, rising to between £38,000 and £40,000 a year. Senior social workers can earn up to around £45,000 a year or more.

Conditions

- You could work for a local authority, as most social workers do, or for a voluntary agency or in the private sector.
- You may work normal office hours but hours are often long and varied including evening and weekend work.
- Depending on your job you might sometimes be on call in case of emergencies, and you may have to work evenings and weekends.
- As a field social worker, you would have to travel to visit clients.
- As a residential social worker, you would probably work shifts and may sometimes stay overnight.

Getting In

- To qualify as a social worker you will need either an Honours degree or postgraduate qualification in social work recognised by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).
- For an Honours degree in social work you will need 3-4 Highers plus subjects at National 5 depending on the institution. This normally lasts 4 years full time, including practical placements.
- If your degree is in another subject, you need to study a 2-year full time postgraduate course in social work.
- If you have a non-graduate qualification in social work, you can study part time distance learning for an Honours degree while working in a social care setting. In Scotland this route is offered by Robert Gordon University and the Open University in Scotland. Your employer may pay your tuition costs.
- If you have a first degree in another subject and want to study for a postgraduate qualification in social work, you may be eligible for a bursary from the SSSC. Bursaries are available if you have been offered a full time place on a postgraduate programme in Scotland. The number of bursaries available is limited. See the SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) website for more information.
- For entry to most social work courses, you will need relevant paid or unpaid work experience. This can include care work, counselling, community work and teaching. You can consult the relevant admissions offices for further details.
- During your study you must complete 200 days of assessed practice in a social care setting.
- 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.
- You will also need to register with SSSC before being accepted.
- A driving licence is useful and may be essential for some jobs.

What Does It Take

You need to be able to:

- work under pressure and remain calm

- demonstrate care and concern for vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- relate to and communicate with people of all ages and backgrounds
- remain detached from clients, to enable you to make effective decisions
- make difficult decisions and act in individuals' best interests.

You should be:

- non-judgemental and able to assess the needs of the groups you are working with
- a good listener, empathetic, observant and understanding
- a good negotiator to arrange resources and help
- confident – able to deal with difficult situations and possibly aggressive clients
- well organised – to monitor your caseload and keep records
- self-motivated and able to work independently.

Training

- After qualifying, your initial training will be on the job.
- Newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) must carry out 144 hours of study (24 days) of training courses, seminars or other suitable learning activities within 12 months (or 18 months if working part time) of registration. 30 hours of these must relate to the protection of children and adults from harm. These activities are part of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL).
- After your initial registration period is complete, registration is ongoing with an annual declaration of CPL hours you have undertaken - the SSSC will decide how much CPL you need to do every year to maintain your registration as a qualified social worker.

Getting On

- You might take training courses to allow you to work in specialisms such as children and families, community care, criminal justice or mental health.
- With experience, you may become a social work first line manager responsible for a team of social workers or for the services in a particular area.
- You may become an assistant director or perhaps a director of social work.

Contacts

British Association of Social Workers (Scotland)
Tel: 0131 221 9445
Website: www.basw.co.uk/scotland
Website (2): www.basw.co.uk
X: @ScotsSW
Facebook: www.facebook.com/BASW.UK

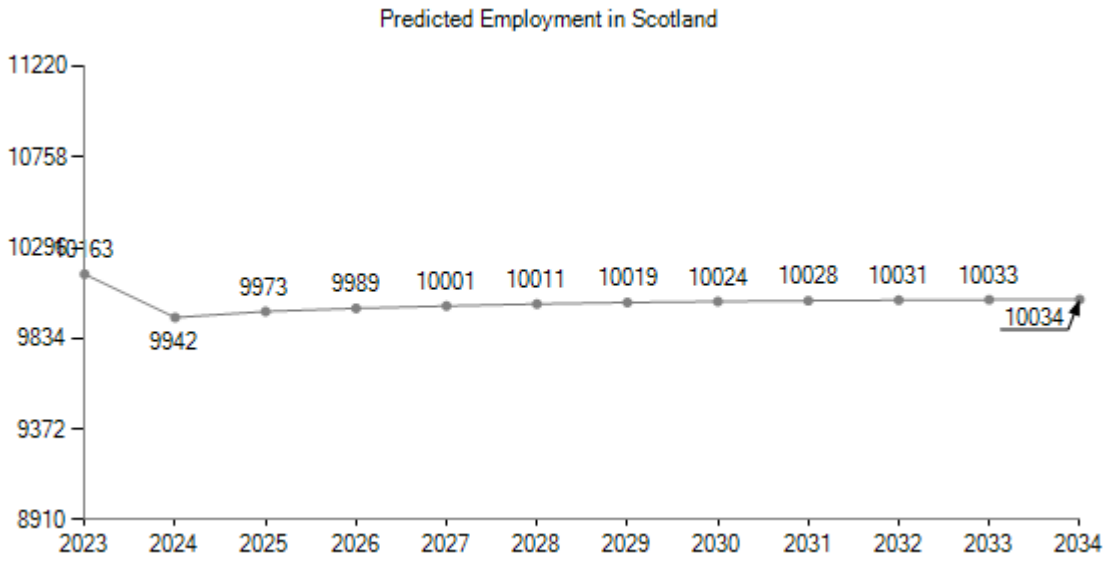
Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)
Tel: 0345 60 30 891
Website: www.sssc.uk.com
Website (2): learn.sssc.uk.com/careers
X: @SSSCnews
Facebook: www.facebook.com/thesssc

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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