

## Working with children: getting started

### An NSPCC factsheet

April 2014

There are a huge variety of options and career paths open to anyone who is interested in working with children and young people. Jobs exist in the private, public and voluntary sectors. This factsheet provides a selection of useful resources for anyone considering a career working with children and young people in the UK.

The main sectors that employ people to work with children are education, social work, childcare and early years, but there are many other professions where, once qualified, it is possible to specialise in working with or for children, rather than adults e.g. paediatrician, family lawyer, counsellor, child psychologist, children's nurse, children's librarian. There are also many volunteering opportunities.

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### Careers and professional development

The [National Careers Service](#) provides tools and advice for adults on learning, training and work opportunities.

The [Open University Careers Advisory Service](#) provides information on possible routes to follow for individuals who want to work with children.

The Register of Regulated Qualifications contains details of Recognised Awarding Organisations and Regulated Qualifications in England (Ofqual), Wales (Welsh Government) and Northern Ireland (Ofqual for vocational qualifications and CCEA Accreditation for all other qualifications). Information about Scotland is available from the [Scottish Qualification Authority \(SQA\)](#).

The NSPCC provides a wide variety of [training on child protection issues](#) for people already working with children and young people.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

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### Education

Schools employ teachers, and also a wide range of other professionals and support staff such as teaching assistants, careers advisers, school nurses, learning mentors and librarians.

The **National College for Teaching and Leadership** is the government agency created to improve the training and development of the school workforce. It was formed when the National College for School Leadership and the Teaching Agency merged in April 2013.

The Department for Education's **Get Into Teaching** web pages provide more information on a career in teaching, including information on salaries, life as a teacher, and how to get started in teacher training.

Each of the four nations has its own General Teaching Council providing further information about qualifications and training for becoming a teacher:

- **National College for Teaching and Leadership (England)**
  - **General Teaching Council for Scotland**
  - **General Teaching Council for Wales**
  - **General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland**
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## Social work

Social workers work with individuals and families who are experiencing difficulties or social exclusion. The role of a social worker is to help people to help themselves, by ensuring they have access to relevant support services. Social workers who work with children are likely to specialise in child protection, youth offending, disabilities or mental health.

Training to become a qualified social worker requires an individual to undertake either a 3-year undergraduate degree in social work or a 2-year postgraduate course. At least 200 days of the course are spent learning in practice settings. There are bursaries available, depending on the circumstances of the students. Some organisations offer Social Work Traineeships where students are employed and work in a variety of social work settings as well as spending time studying.

In England, the **Health and Care Professions Council** is responsible for regulating and supporting social work education and training.

Once qualified, all social workers must register with the **Health and Care Professions Council** in England, the **Northern Ireland Social Care Council**, the **Care Council for Wales** or the **Scottish Social Services Council**.

The title 'social worker' has been protected by law in England since 1 April 2005, which means it is a criminal offence for anyone to use the title or operate as a social worker if they are not registered. Qualified social workers who intend to continue practising must re-register every two years. To be able to do so they must meet the relevant post-registration training and learning requirements.

The **British Association of Social Workers (BASW)** is the largest association representing social work and social workers in the UK. They can provide information and advice to anyone already working in social work, as well as those interested in entering the profession.

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## Childcare and early years

The Early Years Workforce works with children before the start of formal schooling (age 0-5). People working within the early years setting can gain the Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) by proving that they meet the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) which were published in July 2013. This status demonstrates an individual's professional excellence, and promotes high standards throughout the profession. It is equivalent in level to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Childcare professionals may also look after children older than five years outside school hours while the parents are at work (e.g. after school or during school holidays). Nursery nurses usually work in nurseries or nursery, infant and specialist schools. They are responsible for the physical care and safety of the children, as well as their social and educational development.

The Department for Education's **Early years qualifications list** holds information about the relevant qualifications needed for specific jobs within the early years and playwork sector.

Other useful websites for those considering working in early years or childminding include:

- **Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC): working in early years**
  - **National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)**
  - **Professional Association for childcare and early years (PACEY)**
  - **Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA)**
  - **Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA)**
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## Volunteering and other opportunities

There are many opportunities for volunteering with charities that work with children. See the following websites:

- [Volunteering England](#)
- [Volunteering Wales](#)
- [Volunteering Northern Ireland](#)
- [Volunteering Scotland](#)
- [Volunteering for the NSPCC](#)

Fostering involves looking after children, usually for a short period of time, who cannot live with their own parents for the time being. All foster carers receive an allowance to cover the cost of caring for a child in their home. For further information, contact the [British Association for Adoption and Fostering](#).

Youth and community workers mainly work with teenagers, assisting young people in their development. To find out how to become a professional youth worker, contact the [National Youth Agency](#).

The Youth justice system works to prevent offending and re-offending by young people, and to ensure that children who are in custody are safe. For information about working in the youth justice system, contact the [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales](#), the [Youth Justice Agency Northern Ireland](#), or the [Scottish Children's Reporter](#).

Playworkers support children by providing a space for play in places such as out-of-school clubs, play schemes and adventure playgrounds. See the following websites for relevant information:

[British Association of Play Therapists](#)  
[SkillsActive: Playwork](#)



**Contact the NSPCC Information Service with any questions about child protection or related topics:**

**Tel: 0808 800 5000 | Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) | Twitter: [@NSPCCpro](https://twitter.com/NSPCCpro)**

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