

# Training for a career in social work in Northern Ireland

Do you enjoy working with people?

Do you want to change lives and  
make a difference?

Do you like variety and change?

Are you confident, motivated and patient?

Are you good at solving problems?

Yes?

...then social  
work could be  
the career for you!



northern  
ireland

social care council

# Contents

	Page
What is Social Work?	1
Why choose Social Work?	2
Are there jobs in Social Work?	3
What qualification do I need to practise as a Social Worker?	4
Where can I study the Degree in Social Work?	5
What qualifications do I need to apply for the Degree?	6
Are there any other admission requirements?	6
How do I apply?	7
Can I get financial assistance while I am studying?	8
What next?	8

# Contact

## Information Service

Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
7th Floor Millennium House  
19-25 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast BT2 7AQ

Tel: 028 9041 7600

Email: [info@nisocialcarecouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@nisocialcarecouncil.org.uk)

Web: [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

©NISCC August 2008

What is

# Social Work?

Social work is about people, who for a variety of reasons may need extra help and support to cope with everyday living. This can be because of the impact of disability, illness, ageing or where there is risk to the safety or well being of children or vulnerable adults.

Social workers are professionally qualified staff who assess the needs of individuals, families and communities and plan the individual packages of care and support that is best suited to help them. This requires building relationships and supporting people to enable them to realise their potential, take control of their lives and live as independently as possible.

In Northern Ireland social workers and social work students, must be registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and abide by the NISCC Code of Practice. This is to ensure that all social workers and social work students are 'fit to practise' or 'fit to undertake practice learning'. Registration with NISCC demonstrates a social worker's commitment to providing high quality services and enhances the professional status of the workforce.



Why choose

# Social Work?

Social work is a rewarding and challenging career with no two days ever the same. As a qualified social worker, you will fulfil many roles, including counsellor, advocate, protector, listener, problem solver, manager, change agent, mediator and decision-maker. You will work in a variety of settings with a wide range of people, each with their own unique strengths, needs and hopes for the future. This includes:

- Older people
- People with acute, or terminal illness
- People with physical health disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- People with visual and hearing impairments
- Families, children and young people in need of support
- People with mental ill health
- People who are homeless
- People with alcohol and/or drugs dependency
- People who have offended or been affected by crime

Social work involves working with people in sensitive and complex situations without judging them. You will need to be honest, reliable, patient, sensitive and tolerant with a mature attitude and good communication and interpersonal skills. You will need to be able to listen, support and help people face difficult and distressing problems while respecting dignity, choice and confidentiality. It will be important to have sound judgement, good time management skills and be an efficient planner with the ability to manage and present information effectively and clearly. Social work may also involve working with other professionals in the health service, education, housing and criminal justice for example as part of multidisciplinary teams.

If you think you have these personal qualities and abilities or the potential to achieve them and want to do something that changes lives, then social work is the career for you.

# Are there jobs in Social Work?

Yes – the demand for qualified social workers is high. Most newly qualified social workers are employed within six months of graduation and the salary is pretty good too!

As a newly qualified social worker, who has successfully completed an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE), you can expect to have a salary starting at over £22,000 per year, which could progress to around £31,000 per year as you gain experience. (For more details on AYE, go to page 4).

In Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) employ the majority of social workers. Social workers are also employed in many areas within the voluntary sector, as well as the Probation Board for NI, Juvenile Justice, Education Welfare and specialist settings such as addiction services and fostering and adoption.



What qualification

do I need to practise as a

**Social Worker?**



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

In Northern Ireland the Degree is normally a three-year full time course. Some graduates may complete the degree over two years full-time (see page 6 for more details).

Following successful completion of the Degree in Social Work, graduates entering social work employment in Northern Ireland are required to complete an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) as part of continuing social work registration requirements. During this year all newly qualified social workers will be supervised by a registered social worker.

Where can I study the Degree in

# Social Work?

You can normally study for the Honours Degree in Social Work at six locations in Northern Ireland:



Graduates who have a relevant honours degree such as sociology can study on a two-year fast-track route, the Relevant Graduate Route at Queen's University of Belfast and University of Ulster at Magee campuses **only**.

- Queen's University of Belfast (QUB)  
Website: [www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk)
- University of Ulster, Magee (UUM)  
Website: [www.ulster.ac.uk](http://www.ulster.ac.uk)
- Belfast Metropolitan College, Belfast (BMC)  
Website: [www.belfastmet.ac.uk](http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk)
- South West College, Dungannon (SWC)  
Website: [www.swc.ac.uk](http://www.swc.ac.uk)
- South Eastern Regional College, Newtownards (SERC)  
Website: [www.serc.ac.uk](http://www.serc.ac.uk)
- North West Regional College, Derry (NWRC)  
Website: [www.nwrc.ac.uk](http://www.nwrc.ac.uk)

What qualifications do I need to apply

## for the Degree?

You don't have to study specific 'A' Levels to apply to the Degree. Courses in NI will require you to have the following qualifications:

### Academic entry requirements

#### 3 Year Course

- 3 'A' Levels, or other accepted qualifications e.g. a HND, BTEC, Access, Open University, Irish Leaving Certificate
- GCSE English and Maths (minimum grade C), or equivalent.

#### 2 Year Course

- A relevant Honours degree at 2:2 or above
- GCSE English and Maths (minimum grade C), or equivalent.

Are there any other

## admission requirements?

All applicants being considered for a place on the Degree course in Northern Ireland will be interviewed to assess their potential to train to be a social worker at degree level.

While it is not essential, having some relevant experience will allow you an opportunity to find out if social work is the right career choice for you. It will also give you some practical situations to help illustrate points in your application and subsequent interview.

An information booklet about relevant experience and how to obtain it, is available from the NISCC Information Service. See page 9 for details of additional information booklets.

# How do I apply?

All applications for the Degree in Social Work in NI including those to the F&HE colleges and the Relevant Graduate Route are through the UCAS system.

Application packs are available from the UCAS website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and can be made online.

The closing date for the Degree courses is usually mid January. UCAS opens for applications from September of each year.

Additional information about social work courses and entry requirements is available from the UCAS website or by contacting the university/colleges directly. (See page 5 for contact details).



## Can I get financial assistance while I am studying?

Similar to other undergraduates, applicants applying for the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland, may be eligible for financial support from their Education and Library Board.

In addition to any provisions made to students by their local Education and Library Board, the DHSSPS (NI) offers a financial Incentive Scheme to attract students domiciled in Northern Ireland to study for the Degree in Social Work in Northern Ireland.

The DHSSPS (NI) Student Incentive Scheme offers social work students who are eligible

- A non-means tested Incentive Grant of £4,000 for each year of the agreed duration of the course towards the costs of study; and
- A contribution of £500 per year towards the expenses related to work based learning.

More information on social work funding is available from the NISCC Information Service.

## What next?

The NISCC Information Service has produced a range of information booklets aimed at promoting social work and social care to the general public, careers advisory staff, education providers, employers, and our stakeholders. These information booklets are available from the NISCC website at [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info) or individual copies can be supplied free of charge. To request booklets, complete and return the tear-off form overleaf.

## Other useful publications:

To request additional publications, please tick and complete the tear off section below:

### **Honours Degree in Social Work in NI: Advice for Applicants**

(This booklet is the detailed information pack for those applying to the Degree in SW in NI)

### **Relevant experience for entry to the Degree in Social Work in NI**

(This booklet explains why having relevant practical experience is beneficial for entry to the Degree for potential social work applicants)

### **Social Care Contacts**

(This booklet provides relevant contacts for those intending to work, train or volunteer in social care or social work in NI).

### **DHSSPS – Degree in Social Work in NI Incentive Scheme**

(This booklet provides details of DHSSPS social work funding scheme).

### **A Career in Social Care**

(This booklet provides a general introduction for those interested in working in social care in NI).

### **Please send additional publications to:**

Title (Mr, Miss, Mrs, Ms, etc): \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about the NISCC Information Service?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



northern  
ireland social care council

Affix  
stamp  
here

Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
7th Floor Millennium House  
19-25 Great Victoria Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 7AQ