

Social Care Career Pathways

This short guide has been developed by the Local Government Association in association with Spark & Associates, using the knowledge and experiences of Local Authorities (LAs) across England. It aims to help Councils and their staff understand the career opportunities available through apprenticeships. This guide focusses on the career pathways in Social Care, and how apprenticeships can create a progression pathway for that occupational area. The existence of apprenticeship mapping to job roles and career progression routes is an indicator of a Mature Council on the LGA's Maturity Model and is an important stage in developing a sustainable long-term apprenticeship plan. Enabling career progression via apprenticeships increases the impact of your apprenticeship programme by targeting staff development and supporting retention. It also facilitates growth in apprenticeship numbers – because employees don't just 'stop' at one apprenticeship – they will be looking to the next step.

Hints and Tips on How to Use this Guide

This guide shows the progression possibilities open to you in Social Care, and how a long-term career can be supported through professional development using apprenticeships. Development Pathways are not always linear and can include sideways steps for you to gain additional specialist skills and knowledge, or to move into a different field in your occupational area. Talk to your line manager or HR department for more information on the apprenticeships available in your organisation.

Read alongside the LGA's complementary tools: **Social Care and Social Work Career A-Zs**

The main element of this guide is the progression pathway diagram on the next page. This shows all the apprenticeships linked to this occupational area relevant to LAs (the diagram combines Adult and Children's Services) - providing suggested entry points careers in this area. Ensuring lower-level front line employees are aware of the career pathways available to them will aid retention can also support a Council's Social Mobility aims, [this report](#) by the Social Mobility Commission tells you more on this.

The diagram shows the name of the apprenticeship, the linked job titles are likely to be different, so it's important to review the content of the apprenticeship to see whether it fits the role and job description. The [LGA's mapping tool](#) can help with this and you can find details of the content on the apprenticeship's page on the [IFATE's website](#). Your training provider can also support you by comparing your role with the requirements of the apprenticeship to ensure the right one is chosen to fit both the job and individual's level of experience.

When progressing to a higher level of apprenticeship in some cases job titles may change or it's possible an employee progresses to a more senior role with more responsibility but keeps the same job title. In either case what's important is that at least 12 months of teaching and training is required to reach competence in the requirements of the apprenticeship. Again, your training provider can help you determine this by undertaking an initial assessment of the apprentice's skills and experience.

How Apprenticeships can Form a Career Pathway in Social Care

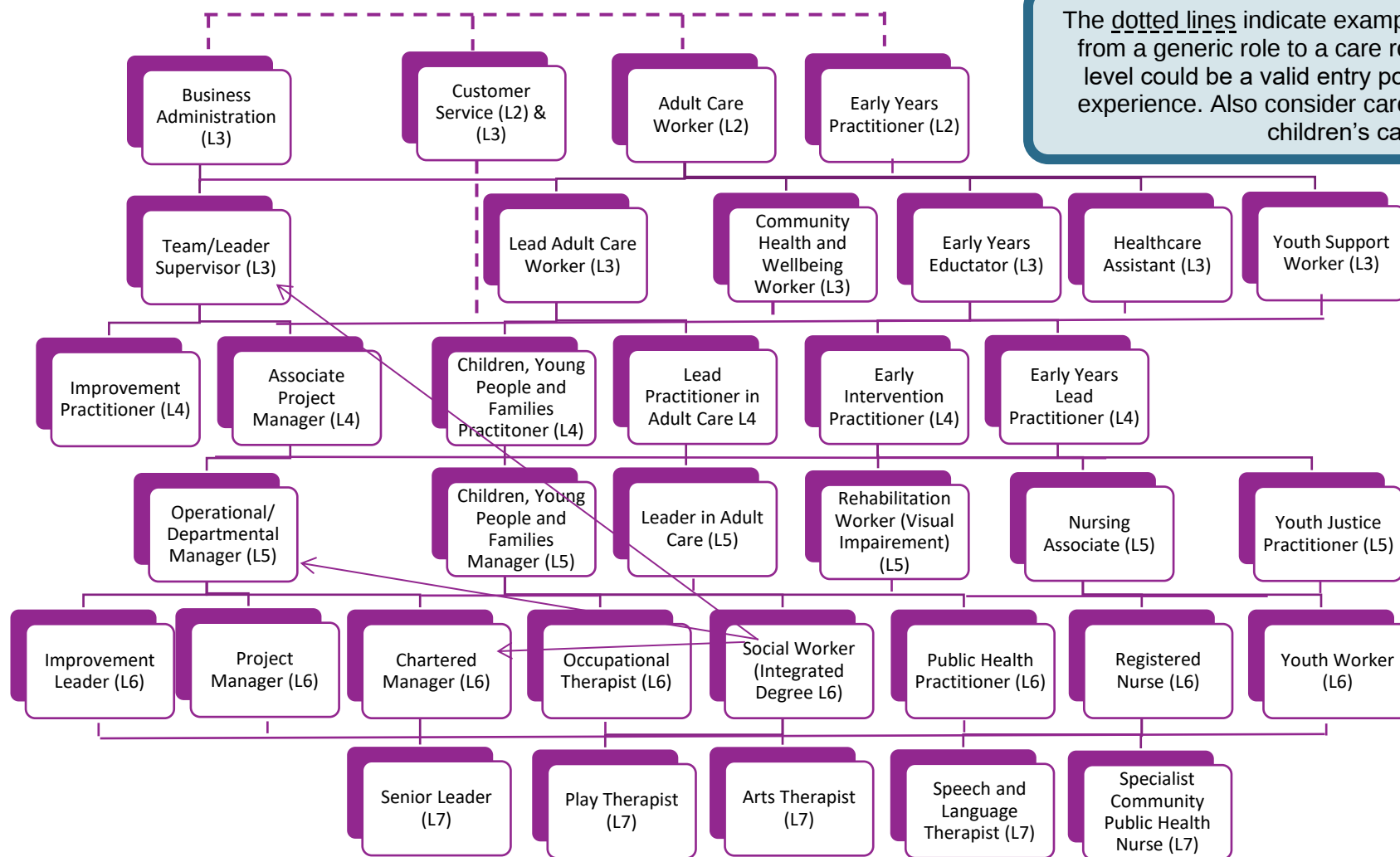
Social Care is such a critical function within LAs, but equally one where it is hard to attract and retain staff. A [report by Skills for Care](#) notes that in 2020/21 there were an average of 105,000 vacancies posted each day in the sector, with turnover hitting 30%. This emphasises how important it is for Councils to have a strategy for their social care workforce to tackle these issues, and apprenticeships can play a key part in this planning.

Clear, well communicated progression routes are a way to aid retention, particularly for front line staff who are often not a target for development and where turnover rates can be highest. We know from experience that once a member of staff has been with the LA for an extended period (e.g., 12-18 months) there is a big jump in long term length of service, offering apprenticeships as entry routes and development opportunities leads to that longevity. Improvements here can also reduce agency workers which add cost and can mean less consistent quality of care for the service users.

The diagram below shows the opportunities open in a host of care and support roles. It also how entry level roles in social care have the potential to develop into professional qualification and careers in a range of areas – creating a sustainable talent pipeline.

Councils have started to see benefits from new ways of working and training staff in care professions, for example:

- Rotational apprenticeships - creating apprenticeships that rotate different LA care environments (e.g., adult, children's, community, residential, learning disabilities) increases the individual's skills, and allows a better understanding of the job that is likely to suit them best – aiding future retention. (A 'Care Academy' approach – consider internal and external applications).
- Joint/shared apprenticeships with local healthcare providers - again giving apprentices a broader foundation of knowledge and experience and helps the individual choose an onward role that they prefer and are more likely to stay with.
- Pre-apprenticeship programmes – consider utilising work experience, traineeships, or other pre-apprenticeship opportunities in care to better prepare people for the onward career and enable them to make an informed choice before entering permanent roles and/or apprenticeships. These entry pathways can also be a good stepping stone for care leavers.



The dotted lines indicate examples of where a sideways move from a generic role to a care role at the same or even lower level could be a valid entry point depending on individual's experience. Also consider career moves between adult and children's care services.

More Support:

- Search the [IFATE website](#) to find out more on each apprenticeship, their content and format.
- Refer to the LGA's **Social Care Career A-Z** [here](#) and the full **Mapping Tool** available [here](#) for more detailed mapping of roles to apprenticeships.
- And listen back to the **LGA Webinars on Social Care and Social Work** and available on the KHUB [HERE](#)

Check **IFATE's Revisions Status Report** detailing apprenticeships undergoing revision, showing the stage they have reached and an overview of why they are being reviewed. Find out more about how to use this report [HERE](#).

E.g., at the time of writing (Apr 22) the Children, Young People and Families Practitioner and Manager apprenticeships are being revised, as is Social Worker (to become fully integrated).

Managerial Skills

The arrows on the diagram indicate how progression for a qualified Social Worker/OT/Nurse may not always involve higher level apprenticeships and training. If they are new to management a lower level apprenticeship may be the next step on their career pathway to support effective leadership. However, it's key to ensure robust initial assessment prior to starting any apprenticeship to ensure it is the right programme and the individual is eligible (in some cases a shorter more bespoke course could be better suited).

This diagram aims suggest a variety of entry points and varied occupational paths in Social Care. Look across departments and job roles for existing staff who can be retained and progress to a new career route via apprenticeships. Good publication of the possible pathways is key, as is line manager awareness.