

Social Care Apprenticeship Roles and 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.

Building a Career in Social Care Supported by Apprenticeships

What this Career Pathway Guide Shows

This pathway shows how careers in Social Care within a council can be developed through apprenticeships, from entry-level support roles through to professional, specialist and leadership positions.

This guide provides a broad Social Care career pathway, illustrating how careers can develop across adult social care, children's social care, family support, community services and related specialist roles.

Social Care plays a vital role in supporting people, families and communities, including care and support, safeguarding, early help, reablement, mental health, learning disability, occupational therapy and social work. Apprenticeships provide structured routes to build skills, progress into specialist, professional and leadership careers and, in some cases, achieve recognised professional qualifications.

Why this matters (for councils and learners)

Local authorities operate in a challenging labour market for social care skills. Apprenticeships provide a practical way to attract new talent, develop existing staff and support long-term workforce planning, including "grow your own" approaches to hard-to-recruit roles.

Clear and well-communicated progression routes:

- support recruitment and retention
- create opportunities for career development and progression
- help build sustainable in-house care, support and professional capability.

How to use this Guide

This guide outlines typical entry points, progression routes and relevant apprenticeships across Social Care and related professional roles. Entry routes may include A Levels, T Levels, foundation apprenticeships, higher education, career change, or internal progression from care, support, community, business support or operational roles.

Development pathways are not always linear. Individuals may:

- move into specialist areas such as adult care, children and families, early help, reablement, mental health, safeguarding, occupational therapy or social work
- progress into professional qualification or leadership routes
- take sideways steps to build broader care, community or specialist experience.

Job titles and roles may vary between councils, so apprenticeship suitability should be reviewed against role requirements and prior experience. Training providers and employers can support this through initial assessment and guidance.

Details of apprenticeship standards and career progression routes can be found on the [Skills England website](#), including their [Occupational Maps](#).

Understanding progression

The pathway diagram on page 3 illustrates how careers can develop across Social Care roles, from entry-level to senior and specialist positions. It highlights:

- typical entry routes into social care careers
- progression between levels and professional pathways
- relevant apprenticeships that support care, support, specialist and professional development.

Progression may involve changes in role, responsibilities or specialist area, or increased responsibility within similar roles as skills develop.

Typical Career Progression Routes – Adult Social Care

This table shows typical job roles by level within Adult Social Care and related support services in a council, alongside examples of relevant apprenticeships. It provides an overview of how individuals can enter these careers, develop specialist knowledge and skills, and progress into professional or leadership roles.

Guide to typical progression in Adult Social Care careers linked to apprenticeship / qualification levels:

- **Entry (L2–3):** Build core care, support, wellbeing or community-based skills
- **L4:** Develop specialist expertise in areas such as adult care, safeguarding, reablement or community support
- **L5–6:** Progress into advanced practitioner, management, specialist or professional roles
- **L7:** Progress into senior professional, strategic or leadership roles (subject to policy / funding availability).

Career Stage	Typical Roles+	Example Relevant Apprenticeships
Entry and Early Careers (Level 2/3)	Care Assistant / Adult Care Worker / Home Care Worker Support Worker / Learning Disability Support Worker / Mental Health Support Worker Reablement Support Worker / Day Service Worker Community Support Worker / Carers Support Worker Business Support Officer / Customer Contact Officer	Health and Social Care Foundation Apprenticeship (L2) Adult Care Worker (L2) Healthcare Support Worker (L2) Lead Adult Care Worker (L3) Community Health and Wellbeing Worker (L3) Business Administrator (L2 / L3) Customer Service Practitioner / Specialist (L2 / L3)
Technical and Developing Roles (Level 3/4)	Senior Support Worker / Senior Care Worker Reablement Worker / Early Intervention Worker Adult Social Care Officer / Community Care Officer Safeguarding Support Officer / Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Worker Care Coordinator / Carers Support Worker	Lead Adult Care Worker (L3) Community Health and Wellbeing Worker (L3) Senior Healthcare Support Worker (L3) Safeguarding Support Officer (L3) Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Worker (L4) Early Intervention Practitioner (L4)
Professional and Specialist Roles (Level 5/6)	Occupational Therapy Assistant / Occupational Therapist Assistant Practitioner / Advanced Practitioner Registered Manager / Service Manager Principal Occupational Therapist Rehabilitation Worker / Sensory Impairment Practitioner Adult Social Care Intelligence / Performance roles	Leader in Adult Care (L5) Assistant Practitioner - Health (L5) Rehabilitation Worker - Visual Impairment (L5) Occupational Therapist (L6) Social Worker (L6) Public Health Practitioner (L6)
Strategic and Leadership Roles (Level 6/7)	Head of Adult Social Care / Head of Integrated Services Principal Social Worker / Principal Occupational Therapist Strategic Commissioning / Adult Care Leadership roles Public Health / prevention leadership roles	Social Worker (L6) Senior Leader (L7)* / other specialist or leadership development (subject to availability) Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (L7)* Health and Care Intelligence Specialist (L7)*

Typical Career Progression Routes – Children’s Social Care, Early Help and Family Services

This table shows typical job roles by level within Children's Social Care, Early Help and Family Services in a council, alongside examples of relevant apprenticeships. It provides an overview of how individuals can enter these careers, develop specialist knowledge and skills, and progress into professional or leadership roles.

Guide to typical progression in Children's Social Care careers linked to apprenticeship / qualification levels:

- **Entry (L2–3):** Build core skills supporting children, young people and families
- **L4:** Develop specialist expertise in early help, family support, residential care, youth justice or safeguarding
- **L5–6:** Progress into advanced practitioner, management or professional roles
- **L7:** Progress into senior professional, strategic or leadership roles (subject to policy / funding availability).

Career Stage	Typical Roles+	Example Relevant Apprenticeships
Entry and Early Careers (Level 2/3)	Family Support Assistant / Children’s Support Worker Children’s Residential Care Worker Early Help Worker / Community Support Worker Youth Support Worker / Playworker Business Support Officer / EHCP or SEN Support Officer	Health and Social Care Foundation Apprenticeship (L2) Playworker (L2) Youth Support Worker (L3) Community Health and Wellbeing Worker (L3) Safeguarding Support Officer (L3) Business Administrator (L2 / L3) Customer Service Practitioner / Specialist (L2 / L3)
Technical and Developing Roles (Level 3/4)	Family Support Worker / Family Practitioner Early Intervention Practitioner Children, Young People and Families Practitioner Residential Childcare Worker / Residential Team Leader Youth Justice Officer / Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Worker	Children, Young People and Families Practitioner (L4) Early Intervention Practitioner (L4) Domestic and Sexual Abuse Support Worker (L4) Youth Justice Practitioner (L5) Children, Young People and Families Manager (L5)
Professional and Specialist Roles (Level 5/6)	Senior Family Practitioner Children’s Services Practitioner Social Worker / Practice Educator Youth Justice Practitioner / Youth Worker SEND / safeguarding specialist roles	Children, Young People and Families Manager (L5) Youth Justice Practitioner (L5) Social Worker (L6) Youth Worker (L6) Speech and Language Therapist (L6) Occupational Therapist (L6)
Strategic and Leadership Roles (Level 6/7)	Principal Social Worker Head of Early Help / Head of Children’s Social Care Service Manager / Group Manager Strategic Children and Families Leadership roles	Social Worker (L6) Play Therapist (L7)* Senior Leader (L7)* / other specialist or leadership development (subject to availability)

Social Care Career Pathway

Pre-Entry, e.g.:

- ✓ A Levels
- ✓ T Levels (e.g. Health; Education and Early Years)
- ✓ Other relevant academic / career entry routes.

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 an individual's experience and aspirations. Also consider career moves between adult and children's care services.

Opportunities Across Departments

Social care-related roles may be found across Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Early Help, Family Support, Public Health, Housing, Community Wellbeing, Learning Disability, Mental Health and other council services. This can support both career progression and apprenticeship workforce planning across the council.



*Apprenticeship availability is subject to policy changes. Funding for Level 7 apprenticeships is subject to current government policy and eligibility criteria. Also check **Skills England's Revisions Status Report** for apprenticeships undergoing revision, showing the review stage and reason for review