

WORKING WITH **DISABLED** PEOPLE



A POSITIVE CAREER CHOICE

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WORKING WITH DISABLED PEOPLE

Working with disabled people can be an extremely rewarding area of work which involves supporting disabled people to lead fuller, more independent lives.

The Equality Act defines a disabled person as 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Physical disabilities can include mobility impairments or sensory impairments such as Severely Sight Impaired (blind), Sight Impaired (partially sighted), Hard of Hearing or Deaf or Deaf-blind.

A people centered approach to support means that emphasis is placed on enabling disabled people to lead full, independent lives, taking up education and employment opportunities and contributing to their communities. There's a demand for people to work with disabled people in roles that support independence, e.g. Personal Assistants are employed directly by disabled people to support them with everyday tasks or to participate in leisure activities, such as going shopping or driving to college or work.



Some other roles that involve working with disabled people include:

- Occupational Therapists who discuss and then assess the disabled person's needs, recommending household adaptations and equipment services which help to improve independence and quality of life.
- Social workers who work with disabled people to assess needs and arrange the right level of support.
- Disability Employment Advisers within the Job Centre or organisations like Shaw Trust who provide additional support to ensure that disabled people can take advantage of suitable employment opportunities and other services which improve access to employment.

The impact of some impairments and health conditions may be so severe that living a full independent life is challenging and some roles may involve providing personal care, e.g. assisting with bathing or dressing. This support could be provided within the disabled person's home, in a residential home or in day centre's which provide opportunities for disabled people to take part in social activities and learn new skills.



TYPICAL DUTIES INCLUDE:

- Providing support, assistance and explanations or demonstrations of services or goods available, enabling disabled people to choose services and elements of care that meet their specific needs, promoting independence and a way to contribute to their community;
- Supporting people to access employment and leisure opportunities;
- Driving and accompanying disabled people, e.g. to college, school, medical appointments, shops and cinemas;
- Assisting the disabled person with exercise and taking medication, and keeping accurate records of these tasks;
- In some cases, providing intimate personal assistance, including going to the toilet, bathing, dressing and undressing, and repositioning limbs for comfort; and
- In some cases assisting with activities of daily living, including cleaning the home, making up beds, cooking meals, making drinks, shopping, washing and ironing clothes.

TO WORK WITH DISABLED PEOPLE, YOU'LL NEED TO:

- Be respectful, non judgemental and have an understanding of and a commitment to disability equality, maintaining the service user's dignity and right to an independent life;
- Be open minded with a flexible attitude, maintaining strict confidentiality at all times;
- Possess a caring, positive disposition and get on well with people;
- Be trustworthy, reliable and punctual;
- Have good verbal communication skills and also good report writing skills and be able to follow procedures correctly;
- Be willing to work differing shift patterns and sometimes working unsociable hours;
- Be aware of the [Code of Practice for Social Care Workers](#) and have a commitment to abide by its principles; and
- Have a valid Criminal Records Bureau check and possibly have a full and clean driving licence.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Carers or assistant support workers will normally possess a [QCF Level 2 Diploma in Health and Social Care \(Adults\) Wales and Northern Ireland](#), or a predecessor equivalent. A qualification is not always required to start work - some personal experience of care or support work may be sufficient initially, and your employer may support you to complete the Level 2 Diploma, once in post.



SALARY AND CAREER PROGRESSION

For carer and support worker roles, the starting salaries will be close to the [national minimum wage](#), with some personal assistant roles starting a few pounds an hour above this rate, with added enhancements for sleep over duties. Invaluable training will also be provided on the job with skills such as moving and positioning and food preparation being compulsory. Salaries may increase with added experience and qualifications gained.

As you gain further experience and complete your Level 2 Diploma, you may be able to progress to roles with more responsibility, e.g. senior support workers, and you can then continue to study the [QCF Level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care \(Adults\) or \(Children and Young People\) Wales and Northern Ireland](#), and move to more managerial or specialist roles within the sector.

Many roles will allow you to work part time, providing you with a greater degree of flexibility and the ability to choose hours that suit both you and the disabled person. Wales, like the rest of the UK has an ageing population requiring more social care practitioners, meaning excellent career opportunities are available within this setting.

NEXT STEPS

- To gain an insight into the work, you could volunteer as a carer under the supervision of a mentor either in a day centre, accommodation providing respite care or supported living, or you could accompany a Personal Assistant as they go about their daily tasks; you could also volunteer for organisations like Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB](#), [Action On Hearing Loss](#) or [Diverse Cymru](#). Volunteering in the public, voluntary or private sectors can improve your chances of gaining paid employment. Positions are advertised in the local press, certain specialist care provider websites, e.g. [Community Care](#) and at your local job centre or their [Jobcentre Plus](#) website.
- You could undertake the [QCF Level 1 Award/Certificate Introduction to Health and Social Care, Early Years and Childcare \(Wales and Northern Ireland\)](#) opting to study some disability modules, gaining an insight to this setting and demonstrating to future employers your interest and commitment. This is a knowledge based qualification available within schools and colleges for people over 14 years of age.

- Consider getting a CRB check.
- Consider looking for an [Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care](#) in conjunction with an employer. Careers Wales offer an [Apprenticeship Matching Service](#).

The following case study by Claire, a social worker, has many examples where she in her role assesses the needs of service users, and ensures that they are able to access services provided by other social care workers in several different service settings.



CASE STUDY

CLAIRE, SOCIAL WORKER WITH DEAF PEOPLE, PHYSICAL AND SENSORY SERVICES, CARDIFF COUNTY COUNCIL



MY BACKGROUND

I worked as a nurse for several years before having my children. I then went to Cardiff University as a mature student where I obtained a 2:1 degree in Sociology. I then undertook a Masters degree in Population Studies. Following this I worked as a research associate on several research programmes at Cardiff University and in the Institute of Medical Genetics, before deciding to apply for the DipSW at Cardiff University. My second social work placement was in a Physical Disability Team and on completion of my course I was fortunate to be offered a permanent post in the team as a Social Worker with Deaf people. I have worked in this role for the past 12 years.

I work primarily with Deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language and my job therefore requires a high standard of competency in BSL. I also work with people who have a dual sensory loss and who have a combined level of deafness and visual impairment.

This sometimes requires the use of alternative methods of communication such as Deafblind manual or Block.

I also work with people who have been Deafened, in that they have lost their hearing suddenly, people who are partially deaf, and when required, people with a visual impairment.

SOME OF MY RECENT DUTIES HAVE INCLUDED:

- Setting up a package of care for a Deaf man who is no longer able to manage at home alone. This has included arranging for carers with sign language skills to assist him in relation to his personal care. I have also arranged for him to be supported to access Deaf cultural activities to reduce the risk of social isolation.
- Arranging Direct Payments for a young man who is totally blind and who has a severe hearing loss. He lives alone and requires support to undertake many aspects of daily living including shopping and accessing community activities.
- Arranging for a blind man with diabetes to attend a Day Centre for baths and hot meals. His housing circumstances are such that he is unable to have baths or manage his personal hygiene, in particular maintain the condition of his feet. He has been offered rehousing but chooses to remain in his own home.
- Assessing partially deaf / hard of hearing people for environmental aids.

- Supporting Deaf young people of transition age to find paid employment and access independent living.
- Establishing an appropriate residential placement for a Deaf woman with early onset Alzheimers disease including a support package to enable her to maintain her links with the Deaf community and to retain her sign language skills for as long as possible.

WHY I ENJOY MY ROLE

“ I feel very fortunate to be in a job that I really enjoy. Of course the pressures of the workload are considerable and the job can be challenging and at times stressful, however it is always interesting and I really feel that I can make a difference to peoples' lives”

Claire