

'No two days are the same and you can make a real difference': social workers reflect on their careers

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. What skills and abilities do you think a social worker needs to have?
2. Would you like to be a social worker? Why or why not?

2 Key words

a. Write a word in bold from the article next to the correct definition.

1. able to do things alone without help _____
2. training programs where people learn how to do a job while earning money

3. to make a situation better _____
4. having the skills or necessary training to do a job _____
5. to stop before doing something because you are nervous or don't have confidence

6. individuals under the age of 18 who have committed a crime or broken the law

7. suggestions about how something should be done _____
8. working together with another person or group towards a shared goal _____
9. a qualification that you get after some years of study at a college or university

10. creates opportunities or make a something possible, especially something new

11. the feature of a product or service that makes it successful _____
12. support and services for older people or those with physical or mental health needs

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity in the correct form.

1. We work _____ with a youth charity to deliver our mental health services.
2. _____ are available for those who want to earn while they learn.
3. The ability to earn while studying is a big _____ for many students.
4. Sam's IT qualifications helped _____ new career opportunities.
5. A(n) _____ support program is offered to teens who find themselves in trouble with the police.
6. New government _____ are meant to help doctors assess patients more quickly.
7. Anna works in _____ and helps older people live at home safely.
8. I need to get someone to _____ my computer – it's not working.
9. Although Victor _____ about giving up his job, he's really glad that he did.
10. Most young adults want to leave home and become _____.
11. Aiden has a(n) _____ in maths from Sheffield University.
12. Suzi is a(n) _____ wild animal vet and works at the London Zoo.

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From paid apprenticeships to degrees, there are many routes to becoming a social worker – here's a look at some of the main ones, and how four people who switched careers found them

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- 1 From **apprenticeships** to degrees, there are many ways to become a social worker – here's a look at some of the main ones, and how four people who changed careers found them.
- 2 Clare Guiry remembers clearly the first time she realised she had made the right decision to give up her job to become a social worker. She was working in **adult social care**, and the 96-year-old woman she was supporting wanted to leave the care home where she was living to be more **independent**. "Everybody thought it wasn't a good idea but I helped her move into a flat where she had carers on site," says Guiry, who works for Oxfordshire county council. "Now she's so happy."
- 3 Guiry, 44, who **qualified** two years ago, says helping people to get what they need to have a better life, or continue the good life they already have, is part of being a social worker.
- 4 That's a view shared by Emily Bell, a social worker in child protection. "I think a lot of people who go into social work would describe themselves as 'fixers' – which was definitely the case for me," says 46-year-old Bell. "But what's become clear to me when working with families is not to come in and **fix** things but rather work **in partnership** to achieve changes that work for them."
- 5 Bell qualified as a social worker last July after completing a second **degree**, paid for by the council. "I knew Cornwall had this scheme where I could work for them and train as a social worker at the same time," she says.
- 6 Being able to earn while learning was essential for Sarah Ritchie, who is just months into her apprenticeship. "The apprenticeship has allowed me to earn while learning, which is its obvious **selling point**," says Ritchie, 44, who gave up a career as a police support worker. "I've been able to do what I want to do without coming out of employment or spending time at university."
- 7 A professional social work qualification **opens the door to** career options, including working with **young offenders** and supporting people with drug and alcohol problems. Rasheed Pendry, who qualified more than 20 years ago, says: "There are so many more career paths now compared to when I qualified."
- 8 Pendry is director of children's social care at Wandsworth council, which last year was recognised for the excellent support it offers its social workers. Pendry says a factor in its success is the number of social workers who stay in the same job for a long time. Pendry is confident that new government **guidelines** about allowing people to see the same social worker over time will have a positive effect. "Children and families don't want to have to retell their story," he says. "We should treat families with the respect they deserve."
- 9 Pendry has worked in adult social care for many years. Does he have any regrets about the decision he took in the 1990s to become a social worker? "No," he says. "I wouldn't **hesitate** for a second to make the same career choice today. It's the best job in the world, where no two days are the same and you can make a real difference."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions with information from the article.

1. Why did Clare Guiry feel she made the right decision to become a social worker?

2. What does Emily Bell say social workers should do instead of fixing problems?

3. How did Emily Bell become a qualified social worker?

4. Why was an apprenticeship a good option for Sarah Ritchie?

5. What career options can a social work qualification lead to?

6. What does Rasheed Pendry say about families and seeing the same social worker over time?

4 Key language

a. Fill in the rules of reported speech.

Reported Speech

- Reported speech is used to tell someone what another person said without quoting them directly. We use it in spoken language more than direct quotes.

Example:

Direct speech: He said, 'I'm hungry now!'

Reported speech: He said (that) he (1) _____ hungry at that moment.

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- When changing from direct to reported speech, you usually:
 - change the verb (2) _____.
 - change (3) _____ as needed. For example, *I* to *he*.
 - change (4) _____ expressions if relevant. For example, *now* to *at that moment*.

Common Tense Changes

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Present simple →	(5) _____
Present continuous →	(6) _____
Present perfect →	(7) _____
Past simple →	(8) _____
<i>Will</i> →	(9) _____
<i>Can</i> →	(10) _____

- b. Rewrite these direct quotes from the article in indirect speech. Choose a suitable reporting verb from the box.

admitted

argued

said

explained

noted

1. 'Everybody thought it wasn't a good idea but I helped her move into a flat where she had carers on site. Now she's so happy.' – Clare Guiry

2. 'I think a lot of people who go into social work would describe themselves as 'fixers' – which was definitely the case for me.' – Emily Bell

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3. 'I've been able to do what I want to do without coming out of employment or spending time at university.' – Sarah Ritchie

4. 'There are so many more career paths now compared to when I qualified.'
– Rasheed Pendry

5. 'We should treat families with the respect they deserve.' – Rasheed Pendry

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- What are the reasons why some people decide to change careers?
- The article presents social work very positively. Pendry calls it 'the best job in the world'. Can you think of any negative points to being a social worker?

6 In your own words

- a. Write a personal statement outlining the reasons why you would or wouldn't want to work as a social worker. Include reasons and examples to support your opinion.**
- b. Share your statements with your classmates.**