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What is a Social Worker, what does the role involve?

As a Social Worker, a big chunk of my time is spent assessing people's needs under the Care Act. We meet and work with people to get to know them and understand their lives, identify things that are going really well as well as exploring what they're struggling with. Often people don't spend time thinking about the things that they're good at or how the people and communities around them can help them, and part of the assessments Social Workers complete include looking for creative solutions to the gaps in people's support.

I also work with some really vulnerable people who might be at risk of some kind of abuse or neglect. As a Social Worker, I'm involved in Safeguarding work that includes exploring incidents where someone was at risk of, or experienced, some form of harm and working with them to reduce the risk of this happening again.

Ultimately, my goal as a Social Worker is to work alongside people and help them identify and achieve goals that are meaningful to them and will contribute to increasing their quality of life.

How did you get into this role?

I started my career in Adult Social Care with Home First, Herefordshire Council's reablement service. This gave me a great insight into the lives of people living in Herefordshire who require care and support to maintain their independence at home.

Following this, I worked for Herefordshire Council's Advice and Referral Team (ART) as a Customer Service Officer. This role involved screening referrals to Herefordshire Council and directing them to the most appropriate service. During my time with ART, I gained more knowledge about the different teams within Adult Social Care and what they do. I then worked in one of Herefordshire Council's Adult Social Care Locality Teams as an Assessment and Enablement Officer (AEO). This job involved assessing needs of adults, sourcing appropriate support and reviewing support plans to make sure they were effective in meeting people's needs and improving their quality of life.

How did you get into this role continued....

It was during my job as an AEO that I decided I wanted to qualify as a Social Worker. I already had an undergraduate degree in Sociology so decided to apply for a post-graduate fast track programme called Think Ahead. This is a two year programme during which I completed a Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work and completed 3 Social Work placements in order to qualify as a Social Worker in September 2021. Unfortunately, Think Ahead don't currently partner with Herefordshire Council so I had to leave and relocate to the North East to take part.

I completed the first year of the programme but during my second year, I really missed the support and working environment I'd had when working for Herefordshire Council which sadly wasn't the experience I had in the Local Authority I'd moved to. Mid 2022, I decided to return to Herefordshire Council to complete my Social Work training and secured a job with County Team.

I have been working back in Herefordshire since July 2022 and started my ASYE, my newly qualified year, in November 2022. Come November 2023, I will have completed my ASYE and my journey as training and qualifying as a Social Worker will be complete.

Working for Herefordshire Council, in different roles, gave me a really good grounding, knowledge and experience I needed to start my career in Social Work. Having left to gain the qualifications I needed to qualify as a Social Worker, I'm really happy to be back working for a Local Authority and within a team that gives me the support I need to do my job well, but also to make sure that I'm happy doing it. That's not always the easiest thing to find.



What advice would you give to others?

Although my career path was more of a happy accident than a thought-out 5 year plan, my experience in different roles within Adult Social Care gave me a really good understanding of the journey adults go on from when they first ask for some help to when they receive support. This is really helpful now in my work as a Social Worker as when I am working with people who are at varying stages of this journey, I have insight into their experience which is a good starting point when getting to know someone who I am new to working with.

I would definitely recommend to anyone considering a career in Social Care to explore the different jobs and roles involved in the system to help them understand where they would be most interested in working and where they can gain the skills that will equip them long term in their career.

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