

# SOCIAL WORK



Social workers work with all types of individuals, groups, and communities to assist them to live better lives. They provide advice, support, and resources to help people overcome problems due to poverty, discrimination, and other social injustices.

## **In what kind of situation would a social worker be required?**

A person may be addicted to gambling, drugs, drinking, or other substances. Addiction impacts the individual, their family and friends, and the surrounding community. Social workers may be involved to help the addict get treatment and address how the addiction is affecting the wider community.







Social workers focus on the promotion of equality in society. From helping to keep a family together to supporting someone with mental health problems, social work is a varied, demanding, often emotional and very rewarding career.

**The aim of social work is to enable clients to take charge so that they can solve problems and improve the quality of their own lives.**



## Who do social workers work with?

Some examples are:

- Children and adolescents.
- Individuals with disabilities.
- Homeless people.
- LGBTQ individuals.
- People suffering with drug and alcohol problems.
- Members of the travelling community.
- Individuals with mental health concerns.
- Refugees and immigrants.
- Aging individuals.
- Couples and families.
- Victims of violence or trauma.
- People in the criminal justice system.

**Social workers work in a variety of settings and they are mainly employed by state agencies.**

- Tusla.
- HSE.
- Education and Training Boards.
- Prison Services.
- Probation and welfare.
- Local authorities, eg housing departments.

## INTERVIEW WITH A SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL

### WHAT MADE YOU GO INTO SOCIAL WORK?

*I wanted to make a difference in the lives of maltreated children especially. We see and hear about the challenges they face every day in abusive/unhealthy households, and I wanted to be the one to improve this situation and help them find the right direction in life.*

### CAN YOU TELL US YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AS A SOCIAL WORKER?

*I have great communication skills. In fact, I've been told I'm quite a people-person. I can remain calm in conflict situations and find the right solutions in times of crises, and I am extremely responsible. I would say that my weakness is perhaps being too honest, although this is a trait I am working to improve.*

### HOW DO YOU BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CLIENTS?

*By spending quality time with them, laughing, crying with them and expressing empathy, they usually feel more relaxed with me. I meet them at the same wavelength, I in no way patronize them, and I might even dress a bit more casually and speak the way they do so they feel some sort of connection to me.*

### WHAT TRAITS SET YOU APART AS A SOCIAL WORKER?

*I would pick two specific traits to highlight that go hand in hand: my empathy and active listening skills. In this field, you're lost without empathy, but I believe in order to be effectively empathetic, you have to master the skill of active listening. I have taken the time to polish both these skills and translate them to my work. It's through empathy and active listening that I'm able to be the social worker I am today.*





## WHY PURSUE A CAREER IN SOCIAL WORK?

As a social worker, you can make a real difference in your community by addressing growing problems in mental health, aging, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, chronic illness, homelessness, and poverty.

Social workers play a crucial role in highlighting and addressing issues relating to discrimination and inequality in society.

You will need specific skills and knowledge to empower you to help others in the most effective way possible such as

- Communication skills
- Empathy
- Critical thinking
- Organizational and time management skills

### SOME WORK ACTIVITIES INVOLVE...

- Preparing for meetings with clients by reading relevant case notes.
- Creating personal care plans for new clients and their situations.
- Home visits
- Writing up reports on client visits.
- Counselling individuals, families, or groups.
- Organising, supporting, and working with community groups.
- Attending case conferences and possibly court hearings.
- Keeping accurate records.

## How to become a social worker?

In Ireland, there are not a lot of undergraduate courses in social work.

Trinity College provides an undergrad programme – ***Bachelor in Social Studies (485 CAO points)***

Other universities (UCC, UCD, NUIG, TCD & ATU) offer a Masters in Social Work which can be accessed by graduates of degrees in other fields.

Throughout your study, you will engage in multiple practice placement periods which will act as invaluable learning.

A social worker must become a registered member of CORU post-graduation. CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health regulator responsible for regulating health and social care professionals.