

Northern Ireland



Qualification Guide for Social Care

Version 4 – August 2020



Forward

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Social Care Council) is the regulatory body for the social care workforce in Northern Ireland. The Social Care Council's role is to register social care workers; to set standards for their training & practice and to support professional development across the workforce.

The Social Care Council is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department of Health, (NI) and founded under the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

Many people rely on the honesty, integrity and professional skills of social care workers.

The Social Care Council has developed the “Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers” **which covers the conduct, training and practice of social care workers.**

Any social care worker is required to register with the Social Care Council and all registrants must work to the standards in order to maintain their registration.

The Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers set out what are essential for regulating the profession and helping to improve standards and public protection.

Through workforce registration and regulation, the Social Care Council are helping to raise standards in social care and strengthening public protection.

Every social care worker and employer can access a copy of the Standards of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers from the Social Care Council's website <https://niscc.info/>.

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Resources available including links to the DHSSPS Minimum Standards and useful websites.

1. Introduction

A career in social care offers challenging and rewarding opportunities to work with adults, children, young people, families and older people. Social care workers ensure that practical, social and emotional support is provided to the highest standard.

The Social Care Council works with key partners and professionals in Northern Ireland to promote a career in social care and to ensure workforce Learning and Development is a key element for organisations providing social care services.

This guide aims to provide assistance for both employers and social care staff on relevant qualifications that are essential and / or, desirable in developing the required knowledge and competency, to ensure support and care are provided to the highest standard. Social care staffs' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is fundamental to this.

This guide will therefore provide information on workforce Learning and Development, starting with induction and continuing with the Learning and Development journey social care staff can take to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and competency required for their role in providing continuous support and care to individuals.

All of this Learning and Development can be used to evidence Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL). Further guidance and information on PRTL can be accessed [here](#)

Registered managers in regulated services are the ONLY group of social care staff where it is a mandatory requirement to have a qualification as detailed in pages **14 – 20** of this guide.

For all other staff, employers may use this guide to inform Learning and Development plans. This guide is for advice and guidance and to help support individuals consider what learning, development and qualifications they may need to progress their careers or maintain and develop their knowledge and competency related to their work area (CPD).

This is a guide to qualifications for social care staff. **It is not, nor should it be used as, a definitive list of qualifications, learning and development required to work in social care.**

Employers across all sectors and services set their own specific qualification and training requirements based on service need. This guide can help to inform and support staff, when considering options for their CPD.

2. Job Roles and Titles

Social care employers in Northern Ireland use a range of job titles to describe social care posts, e.g. day care worker, support worker, domiciliary care worker, home help/home care worker, senior support worker, deputy or assistant manager, service manager and registered manager.

Social care services are provided across statutory, private and voluntary sectors, therefore using specific job titles that may not be recognised in different sectors can cause confusion.

This guide will concentrate on the roles and the associated functions and responsibilities, with the responsibilities being the determining factor for the level of qualification taken.

It will also identify specific qualifications for CPD and where appropriate identify what is required by the minimum standards.

Employers across all sectors and services set their own specific qualification requirements based on service need. This guide can help inform and guide staff with their CPD.

Job Example	Job Role & Function	Desirable/Current Qualification and CPD
Care assistant Support worker Day care worker level 1 Reablement worker Residential care worker Nursing home care assistant Domiciliary care assistant/home care worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Care and support ❖ Assist with everyday living ❖ Working to support/area/assessment plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction • In house training • On-going CPD • Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland • Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Northern Ireland)
Senior support worker Day care worker level 2 Residential – senior care worker Senior care assistant Family workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Care and support ❖ Keyworker role ❖ Care plan responsibilities ❖ Front line supervisor and line manager responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction • In house training • On-going CPD • Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social

Community care assistant		Care (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Northern Ireland)
Senior support worker Assistant/deputy manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff management • Supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 4 Care and NVQ 4 Health & Social Care • Management Qualification • Degree and Diploma • On-going CPD • Level 4 Certificate in Principles in Leadership & Management (Northern Ireland) • Level 4 Diploma Adult Care (Northern Ireland)
Team leader Area domiciliary care managers Senior day care workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assessment and care planning ❖ Team development ❖ Networking ❖ Decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 4 Care and NVQ 4 Health & Social Care • Management Qualification
Registered manager (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing home manager • Residential care home manager • Domiciliary care manager • Service manager • Day care manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Management ❖ Supervision ❖ Team development ❖ Networking ❖ Decision making ❖ Governance ❖ Financial planning and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 4 Care • NVQ 4 Health & Social Care (2) • Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care (Adult Management) Wales and Northern Ireland • Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care (Adult Residential Management) Wales and Northern Ireland • Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Health & Social Care

		<p>Northern Ireland (<i>NB - 2 pathways available Adult or Residential Adult depending on service area</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management qualification• Professional social work qualification• Nursing qualification• Allied health professions• On-going CPD
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3. Level 2 Qualifications for job roles/functions such as:

Care assistant Support worker Day care worker level 1 Reablement support worker Residential care worker Nursing home care assistant Domiciliary care assistant/home care worker			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Care and support ❖ Assist with everyday living ❖ Working to support/area/assessment plans
Essential	Desirable Current Qualifications	CPD	Other/previous accepted qualifications ¹
<p>All new staff should receive suitable induction training from their employer within the first six months of commencing employment.</p> <p>There is no requirement that staff take an accredited qualification in induction.</p> <p>The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for induction aligned to the Council's Standards of Conduct and Practice – to access these resource click here</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults) (Northern Ireland)² • Level 2 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland).³ 	<p>All registered social care workers must undertake continuous professional development (CPD) during their period of registration.</p> <p>This is called Post Registration, Training and Learning (PRTL).</p> <p>Registered social care staff are required to complete 90 hours of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) in each registration period.</p> <p>The Social Care Council defines PRTL as “the Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 2 Health & Social Care • NVQ 2 Care

¹ Staff holding these qualification should be updating learning & development through CPD

² Open for registration 1 September 2019

³ Closed for registration 31 August 2019

		<p>and Development activities or CPD through which you maintain and develop your competence throughout your career”.</p> <p>The Social Care Council have developed a range of learning resources for CPD, to access these resources click here</p>	
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4. Level 3 Qualifications for job roles/functions such as:

Senior support worker Day care worker Residential – senior care worker Reablement Support worker Senior care assistant Family workers Community care assistant			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Care and support worker ❖ Keyworker role ❖ Care plan responsibilities ❖ Front line supervisor and line manager responsibilities
Essential	Desirable Current qualifications	CPD	Other/previous accepted qualifications ⁴
<p>All new staff should receive suitable induction training from their employer within the first six months of commencing employment.</p> <p>There is no requirement that staff take an accredited qualification in Induction.</p> <p>The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for induction aligned to the Council's Standards of Conduct and Practice – to access these resource click here</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults) (Northern Ireland)⁵ • Level 3 Health & Social Care Diploma (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland.⁶ 	<p>All registered social care workers must undertake continuous professional development (CPD) during their period of registration.</p> <p>This is called Post Registration, Training and Learning (PRTL).</p> <p>Registered social care staff are required to complete 90 hours of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) in each registration period.</p> <p>The Social Care Council defines PRTL as “The</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 3 Health & Social Care • NVQ 3 Care • NVQ 3 Promote Independence

⁴ Staff holding these qualification should be updating learning & development through CPD

⁵ Open for registration 1 September 2019

⁶ Closed for registration 31 August 2019

<p>If you are taking on a team leader role the Social Care Council would recommend that you complete all or the relevant part of the Manager's Induction Programme, to access that resource click here</p>		<p>Learning and Development activities or CPD through which you maintain and develop your competence throughout your career.</p> <p>The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for CPD, to access these resources click here</p>	
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5. Level 4 Qualifications for job roles/function such as:

Senior support worker Assistant/deputy manager Team leader			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Staff management ❖ Assessment and care planning ❖ Team development ❖ Networking ❖ Decision making
Essential	Desirable Current qualifications	CPD	Other/previous accepted qualifications⁷
<p>All new staff should receive suitable induction training from their employer within the first six months of commencing employment.</p> <p>There is no requirement that staff take an accredited qualification in Induction. The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for induction aligned to the Council's Standards of Conduct and Practice – to access these resource click here</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Diploma in Health & Social Care (Adults) (Northern Ireland)⁸ • Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care (Northern Ireland). • Level 4 Certificate in Principles of Leadership & Management • Level 3 Health & Social Care Diploma (Adults) Wales and Northern Ireland⁹ 	<p>All registered social care workers must undertake continuous professional development (CPD) during their period of registration.</p> <p>This is called Post Registration, Training and Learning (PRTL).</p> <p>Registered social care staff are required to complete 90 hours of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) in each registration period.</p> <p>The Social Care Council defines PRTL as the learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 3 Health and Social Care • NVQ 4 Health and Social Care

⁷ Staff holding these qualification should be updating learning & development through CPD

⁸ Open for registration 1 September 2019

⁹ Closed for registration 31 August 2019

If you are taking on a new manager or team leader role the Social Care Council recommends the completion of all or the relevant part of the Manager's Induction Programme, to access that resource click [here](#)

and development activities or CPD through which you maintain and develop your competence throughout your career.

The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for CPD, to access these resources click [here](#)

6. Level 5 Qualifications for job roles/functions such as:

<p><u>Registered manager</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing home manager • Residential care home manager • Domiciliary care manager • Service manager • Day care manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Management ❖ Supervision ❖ Team development ❖ Networking ❖ Decision making ❖ Governance ❖ Financial planning and management 	
<p>Essential Qualifications and Experience as defined in DHSSPS Minimum Standards for service area</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Other/previous accepted qualifications</p>
<p>Nursing Homes Registered Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a first level nurse with current registration on Part 1 of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register. • Has at least two years' experience, within the last five years, in a similar care setting providing nursing care to the main client group accommodated within the home • Has at least two years' experience, within the last five years, in a similar care setting providing nursing care to the main client group accommodated within the home 	<p>All registered social care managers must undertake continuous professional development (CPD) during their period of registration.</p> <p>This is called Post Registration, Training and Learning (PRTL).</p> <p>Registered social care staff are required to complete 90 hours of Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) in each registration period.</p> <p>The Social Care Council defines PRTL as the learning and development activities or CPD through which you maintain and develop your competence throughout your career.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a management qualification or two years relevant managerial experience within the last five years 	<p>The Social Care Council have developed learning resources for CPD, to access these resources click here</p>	
<p>Residential Care Home Registered Manager The person has the appropriate combination of qualification, registration and experience as set out below (i.e. either one of the professional qualifications under 1 combined with the experience under 2, or else the option set out at 3 combined with the experience under 4).</p> <p>One of the professional qualifications below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (a) a professional social work qualification and registered on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council register, without condition; <p>or (b) a first level registered nurse on the appropriate part of the NMC register;</p> <p>or (c) allied health professions¹⁰ registered with the Health Professions Council, and a minimum of four years</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 4 Care or NVQ Health & Social Care ¹¹

¹⁰ For these purposes, ‘allied health professions’ mean: arts therapists; dietitians; occupational therapists; orthoptists; Orthotists; physiotherapists; podiatrists; prothetists ; radiographers, or speech and language therapists.

¹¹ See page 51 of Domiciliary Care Minimum Standards, page 85 Day Care Minimum Standards and page 83 Residential Care Home Minimum Standards in relation to transitional arrangements for those registered with NVQ 4 or previous qualifications

of work experience in the health & social care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported by the residential care home. At least two years of this experience must be in a relevant operational management capacity in a health & social care setting.

OR

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care Services (Adults' Residential Management) Wales and Northern Ireland

OR

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health & Social Care (Adult's Residential Management Pathway) Northern Ireland and registered, or be eligible for registration on appointment, on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council 's register, without condition;
- a minimum of five years practice experience in any health & social care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported by the residential care home which must include at least two years relevant experience in an operational management capacity in a health and social care setting.

Domiciliary Care Manager, Supported Living Service Manager

- (a) a professional social work qualification and registered on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council's register, without condition;
- (b) a first level registered nurse on the appropriate part of the **NMC** register;
- (c) allied health professions¹² registered with the Health Professions Council.

AND

a minimum of four years of work experience in any health or social care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported by the agency. At least two years of this experience must be in a relevant operational management capacity in a health and social care setting.

Or

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care Services (Adults' Management) Wales and Northern Ireland

Or

- NVQ 4 Care or NVQ Health & Social Care¹³
- Professional social work qualification
- Nursing qualification
- Allied health professions

¹² For these purposes, 'allied health professions' mean: arts therapists; dietitians; occupational therapists; orthoptists; orthotists; physiotherapists; podiatrists; prosthetists; radiographers, or speech and language therapists.

¹³ See page 51 of Domiciliary Care Minimum Standards, page 85 Day Care Minimum Standards and page 83 Residential Care Home Minimum Standards in relation to transitional arrangements for those registered with NVQ 4 or previous qualifications

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health & Social Care (Adult's Management Pathway) Northern Ireland and registered, or be eligible for registration on appointment, on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council's register, without condition <p>AND a minimum of five years practice experience in any health & social care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported.</p>		
<p>Day Care Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a professional social work qualification and registered on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council's register, without condition; or (b) a first level registered nurse on the appropriate part of the NMC register; or (c) allied health professions¹⁴ registered with the Health Professions Council. <p>AND a minimum of four years' work experience in any health or social</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NVQ 4 Care or NVQ Health & Social Care ¹⁵ Professional social work qualification Nursing qualification Allied health professions

¹⁴ For these purposes, 'allied health professions' mean: arts therapists; dietitians; occupational therapists; orthoptists; orthotists; physiotherapists; podiatrists; prosthetists; radiographers, or speech and language therapists.

¹⁵ See page 51 of Domiciliary Care Minimum Standards, page 85 Day Care Minimum Standards and page 83 Residential Care Home Minimum Standards in relation to transitional arrangements for those registered with NVQ 4 or previous qualifications

care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported by the agency. At least two years of this experience must be in a relevant operational management capacity in a health & social care setting.

OR

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health & Social Care Services (Adults' Management) Wales and Northern Ireland

OR

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Health & Social Care (Adult's Management Pathway) Northern Ireland and registered, or be eligible for registration on appointment on the appropriate part of the Social Care Council's register, without condition

AND

a minimum of five years practice experience in any health & social care setting with one or more of the service user groups supported by the day care setting, which must include at least two years relevant experience in an operational management capacity in a health & social care setting.

7. Useful Contacts, Websites and Resources

- [Northern Ireland Social Care Council](#)
- [Northern Ireland Social Care Council – Learning Zone](#)
- [RQIA Care Standards](#)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#)
- [Health and Care Professional Council](#)

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