

Grow Our Own Social Worker Development Scheme Policy

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What is the aim of the scheme?

The aim of the Grow Our Own Social Worker Development scheme is to support employees to qualify as social workers. The scheme provides an opportunity to undertake a professional qualification in Social Work with a view to working within Children’s or Adult Services.

Once qualified, Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) will have the opportunity to apply for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme with Wiltshire Council. The ASYE programme gives newly qualified social workers additional support during their first year of employment.

Who does it apply to?

It applies to those staff currently working for Wiltshire Council who wish to undertake formal social work training, who have the qualifications required and meet the entry criteria for their chosen programme.

This scheme is available to all Wiltshire Council employees, including those employed on a part-time and job share basis, unless a separate contractual policy applies to a transferred employee to whom separate TUPE terms and conditions of employment apply.

Who does it not apply to?

The scheme is not available to employees on a casual contract, agency workers, or employees who are already qualified social workers.

This policy does not apply to teaching and non-teaching employees employed in maintained schools or academies.

What are the training options?

1. There are five different pathways into gaining a Social Work Qualification:

Career break options:

- [Step up to Social Work](#) – for Families and Children’s Services - funded via Grant income from DfE
- [Frontline to Social Work](#) – for Families and Children’s Services - this is a charity which is also supported by DfE

‘Work and study’ options:

- [Open University BA \(Hons\) in Social Work](#) – for Families and Children’s Services and Adult Social Care
- [Open University Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work](#) – for Families and Children’s Services and Adult Social Care
- [Apprenticeships](#) for Families and Children’s Services and Adult Social Care

2. For an overview of all the options, see the Pathways into Social Work flowchart.
3. [Career break](#) options support employees to take a career break from their employment with Wiltshire Council in order to gain a Social Work qualification. A career break means that the employee will resign from their substantive post and will not be an employee of Wiltshire Council for the duration of the programme. There are two career break programmes available, the [Step up to Social Work programme](#) and the [Frontline programme](#).
4. ‘Work and study’ options support employees to gain a qualification in Social Work whilst continuing to work at Wiltshire Council. There are two programmes available via the Open University, [the Open University BA \(Hons\) in Social Work](#) and the [Open University Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work](#).
5. There is also an apprenticeship route into social work. More information on this can be found [here](#). Depending on the employee’s current role within the council, there are two routes into this apprenticeship – upskilling within their existing relevant role, or applying for the apprenticeship role. Further information can be found in the [apprenticeships section](#).

Career break options

Career break and the Wiltshire Council offer

6. The council's [career break policy](#) will apply to employees if they undertake the Step Up to Social Work or Frontline programme. A career break means that the employee will resign from their substantive post and will not be an employee of Wiltshire Council for the duration of the programme.
7. Under this policy, the Wiltshire Council offer is that, provided that the employee commences the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme with Wiltshire Council within three months of successfully qualifying, they will be able to have their previous continuous service taken into account for contractual benefits. This includes sickness absence, maternity/paternity, long service and annual leave. Continuous service would not be retained for redundancy purposes.
8. This decision may be applied to other hard-to-fill and critical roles where there is evidence of the need to support with recruitment and retention, subject to appropriate analysis and approval by the service's HR Business Partner and Director.
9. Before applying to either the Step up to Social Work or Frontline programme, the employee should discuss their intention to train as a Social Worker and take a career break with their line manager. They should also read the [career break policy](#) so that they fully understand the process and the implications of taking a career break.
10. If an employee is undertaking the Frontline programme and is placed with Wiltshire Council, they will be on a career break for the first year of the programme and be employed as a Newly Qualified Social Worker for the second year on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme.

Line manager considerations

11. Where possible, managers should support an employee's request to take a career break to study a Social Work qualification under the Frontline or Step-up programmes. Managers can liaise with the Principal Social Worker for advice.
12. Please refer to the [career break policy](#) for more information.

Step up to Social Work programme (post-graduate diploma in Social Work)

Overview of the programme

13. The Step-up to Social Work is an intensive fast track 14-month programme, where students are placed within a Local Authority to gain practice experience whilst undertaking academic learning. Successful candidates will be awarded a postgraduate diploma in Social Work.

14. The step-up programme can run every two years. Wiltshire Council works in partnership with the South West Regional Partnership group and hosts placement opportunities for the students taking part in the scheme. The South West Regional Partnership is led by Bournemouth University.

Financial information

15. Successful applicants accepted onto the Step up to Social Work programme will receive a bursary from the Department for Education (DfE). Please visit the [Step-up to social work government website](#) and [Department for Education](#) for more information.

16. The employee will be responsible for payment of their own individual professional fees connected with social work registration.

17. Whilst on placement, employees may be able to claim for business travel mileage if they need to use their own vehicle to travel, however wherever possible employees should car share or use a council vehicle. Please refer to the [business travel mileage allowances policy](#) for more information.

Entry requirements

18. Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- A minimum 2:1 Level 6 degree qualification or minimum 2:2 honours degree plus a higher degree
- GCSEs in English and Mathematics at Grade C / Grade 4 or above
- Completion of their degree
- Minimum of 6 months' full time or equivalent experience of voluntary or paid work with children, young people or families
- Live in England
- Driving license or confirmation that they are able to travel for work

Application and selection process

19. Applications must be submitted via the [Step up to Social Work government website](#). Applications may be open every two years, depending on the Department for Education.

20. If the employee is successful at the application stage, they will be invited to an assessment day organised by Bournemouth University in partnership with the regional local authorities. This will be a full day which will include a face to face interview, a group activity with service users, a written assessment and a telephone exercise.

21. If the employee is accepted onto the programme, they will need to complete a [career break request form](#) as soon as possible which their manager will need to sign off.

After qualifying

22. When an employee successfully completes the programme and gains their Social Work England registration, they will be given an interview with the council. They will be subject to an assessment process before being offered employment as a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW).

Frontline programme (post-graduate)

Overview of the programme

23. The Frontline Social Work Post-graduate programme is an intensive 12-month fast track programme where applicants work within a local authority to gain practice experience whilst undertaking academic learning.

24. The programme runs over two years. The first year qualifies the employee as a social worker through direct work with children and families. During the second year they will work as a Newly Qualified Social Worker and will be responsible for their own caseload.

- Year 1: From September to August, the employee will be supported and assessed by a Consultant Social Worker who oversees four to five students as a “pod” within children’s social care. A practice tutor is also allocated to provide the academic training within the local authority and regional group. On successful completion of Year 1, they will achieve a post-graduate diploma in Social Work.
- Year 2: Successful students who are registered with Social Work England will be employed by the local authority as a Newly Qualified Social Worker. As a Newly Qualified Social Worker, they will complete their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) while continuing to study towards their master’s degree with Frontline.

Financial information

25. If the employee’s application is successful, they will receive a bursary for the duration of the first year of the programme. For more information, please go to the [Frontline website](#).

26. During the second year, the employee will be interviewed by the council and, if successful and having gained their social work registration, will be employed as a Newly Qualified Social Worker on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme. They will be paid as an employee.

27. The employee will be responsible for payment of their own individual professional fees connected with social work registration.
28. If the employee is placed with Wiltshire Council, they may be able to claim for business mileage if they need to use their own vehicle to travel. Please refer to the [business travel mileage allowances policy](#) for more information.

Entry requirements

29. To be eligible for the Frontline programme, the employee must:
- Have a 2:1 or above in an undergraduate honors degree (predicted or obtained) or 2.2 in an undergraduate honours degree as well as a level 7 qualification.
 - Have a grade C or above in Mathematics and English Language GCSE (or equivalent).

Application and selection process

30. Applications must be submitted via the [Frontline website](#). Applications usually open in September each year.
31. When submitting their application, the employee will be able to select the Local Authority that they would prefer to be placed with for their placement, although it is not guaranteed that this will be allocated to them.
32. If the employee's application is shortlisted, they will be invited to an assessment day with Frontline.
33. If the employee is accepted onto the programme, they will need to complete a [career break request form](#) as soon as possible which their manager will need to sign off.

After qualifying

34. If the employee successfully completes the programme and gains their social work qualification, they will be offered the opportunity to apply for a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) vacant position with Wiltshire Council. They will be subject to an assessment process before being offered employment as a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW).

'Work and study' options

Apprenticeships

35. Depending on the employee's current role within the council, there are two routes into this apprenticeship: upskilling within their existing relevant role or applying for the apprenticeship role.

36. Apprentices cannot be asked to repay any of the training costs if they leave the apprenticeship early.

Upskilling apprenticeship route

37. **The upskilling route** is only available for those already undertaking a closely related role, which can continue to be undertaken whilst undertaking the apprenticeship and will enable the employee to develop the key competencies required in the apprenticeship. The employee's current role would usually be within one grade of the L6 apprenticeship grade (H) and they would remain in this role on their current pay for the duration of the apprenticeship.
38. The Family Keyworker (children's) (CA09-1159, Grade I) and Social Care Practitioner (adults) (CA08-1346, Grade H) roles have been identified as roles which would enable postholders to "upskill" through the social work apprenticeship route. Whether other roles are deemed closely related to social care will be decided by the apprenticeship provider, alongside HR and the Principal Social Workers.
39. If the employee is on a role paid at grade J or higher (e.g., Senior Family Keyworker) then, subject to meeting the person specification for the Social Worker apprenticeship, they will move **permanently** to a Family keyworker role and be paid at the top of grade I for the duration of the upskilling apprenticeship. This move would not be a secondment, and there would be no right to return to the Senior Family Keyworker role should they be unsuccessful in completing the apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship role

40. If the employee is on a higher graded role but does not meet the person specification for a Family Keyworker, they will need to move **permanently** into the H grade apprenticeship role for the duration of the apprenticeship. This move would not be a secondment, and there would be no right to move back to their substantive post should they be unsuccessful in completing the apprenticeship.
41. For this programme, the apprentice will need to work a minimum of 30 hours per week for the duration of the training programme
42. The L6 degree apprenticeship rate of pay is Grade H, spinal column point 15, for the duration of the apprenticeship. Wiltshire Council pay scales can be found on [HR Direct](#). All those undertaking the apprenticeship are expected to apply for an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) position at grade J upon successful completion and any previous pay arrangements will cease to apply.
43. This apprenticeship opportunity offers employees a degree level apprenticeship with 20% off-the-job time to train without having to pay any tuition fees. Further information can be found in the [apprenticeship scheme policy and procedure](#).

Open University BA (Hons) in Social Work and Open University Postgraduate (PG) Diploma in Social Work

Line manager considerations

44. Employees must give fair and consistent consideration to requests from employees who wish to undertake a Social Work qualification with the Open University.
45. Where possible, managers are expected to support an employee's request, however the impact to service delivery and to other team members must be considered, as there might not be an opportunity to back-fill the employee's post when the employee is on study days or on placement. The service must therefore be able to provide appropriate cover to deliver the required level of service-to-service users.
46. If managers are unable to agree to a request due to operational requirements, they should forward the request to their Head of Service/Director for further consideration.
47. Please refer to the [Time to train](#) and [Learning and Development policies](#) for further information.

Overview of the programmes

48. The BA (Hons) is a 3-year degree course which combines distance and online learning with face-to-face seminars. The course is split into six modules, with two modules per year.
49. The PG Diploma is a 17-month continuous study programme which also combines distance and online learning with face-to-face seminars. The course is split into 2 modules, each of them taking approximately 8 months to complete.
50. The employee will need to complete practice placements for both the BA and PG programmes. All placements will be with Wiltshire Council.
51. The employee will need to get their line manager's agreement before applying as they will remain employed by the council under the terms and conditions of their substantive post for the duration of the programme.
52. Wiltshire Council will offer the employee advice and assistance via the Organisational Development (OD) team in the form of 1:1 support, support workshops and group supervision for the duration of the study.
53. The OD team will oversee the employee's progression. They will be expected to share the results at the end of each module with them.

Financial information

54. Fees for the BA (Hons) Open university programme can be found [here](#) and for the PG Diploma [here](#).

55. Wiltshire Council will not be responsible for paying the university fees.
56. Wiltshire Council will not be responsible for any other costs incurred as a result of the employee failing and/or having to retake or re-sit exams or assessments.
57. The employee will be responsible for payment of their own individual professional fees connected with social work registration.
58. Employees are able to apply for an interest free loan to help them to fund the course fees. Further information can be found in the [Professional Qualification Learning Loan policy](#).
59. Whilst on placement, employees may be able to claim for business mileage if they need to use their own vehicle to travel. Please refer to the [business travel mileage allowances policy](#) for more information.
60. Travel and other expenses incurred when attending examinations or tutorials will not be reimbursed by Wiltshire Council.

Entry requirements

61. Employees wishing to undertake the BA (Honours) in Social Work must:
- have at least two years continuous service.
 - have GCSE at grades A*-C in English and Mathematics or certified equivalent
 - meet the UCAS tariff threshold of 96 points or equivalent. Details of tariff points awarded to various qualifications can be found [here](#).
 - obtain an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with barred lists (children and adults) check. Please see the [DBS policy and procedure](#) for more information.
 - More information on the entry requirements can be found [here](#).
62. Employees wishing to undertake the postgraduate diploma must:
- have at least two years continuous service.
 - have GCSE grade A*-C in English and Mathematics or certified equivalent.
 - hold an honours degree with a minimum 2:2 classification in any discipline which demonstrates experience of engaging directly with service user in a professional setting.
 - obtain an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with barred lists (children and adults) check. Please see the [DBS policy and procedure](#) for more information.
 - Normally one year's experience either in paid or voluntary sector or a 2:1 classification in a similar discipline such as:
 - Health and Social Care
 - Nursing
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Psychology

- Sociology/Social Studies
- Law/Legal studies
- Teaching/Education
- More information on the entry requirements can be found [here](#).

63. Employees whose first language is not English must achieve an International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS) score of 7 for both the BA (Honours) and the Postgraduate programmes.

Application and selection process

64. Employees are not able to apply directly to the Open University. Applications need to be made via Wiltshire Council as their employing organisation.

65. If employees are interested in the scheme, they will be required to complete a short application form expressing their interest, which will include a personal statement. They will need to submit this to the Organisational Development (OD) team. For more information or to request an application form, please contact learning@wiltshire.gov.uk.

66. A shortlisting process will take place and if the employee is successful, they will be invited to participate in an assessment day organised by the Open University. Wiltshire Council will be involved in the assessment day, and the employee will be advised of the arrangements at the point of invite.

Line manager agreement

67. Employees must discuss their intention to undertake a Social Work qualification with the Open University with their manager and get their agreement before submitting an expression of interest.

68. If the employee's manager is unable to approve their request, they will have to set out the grounds for refusal in writing.

69. Employees have the right to appeal if their request is refused.

70. Please refer to the [Time to train policy](#) for more information.

Time off to study

71. Students on the Open University Programmes will be entitled to one paid day a week for study, pro rata for part-time employees, during university term-time. This will be for the purpose of attending classes/seminars or completing coursework or online learning.

72. Time off studying will be classified as normal 'working time' and therefore Wiltshire Council's policies, procedures and contractual obligations will apply.

73. Employees will be released from their substantive post to complete 2 practice placements. They will not be expected to undertake any duties related to their substantive post whilst they are on placement.
74. If further time is required, employees may reach an agreement with their manager to work flexibly or use flexitime or annual leave. All arrangements for time off must be approved by their manager before it is taken.
75. There is an expectation that employees will need to complete additional study in their own time to successfully complete the course.
76. For more information please refer to the [Learning and Development](#) and [Time to train policies](#).

Employee/Student commitment

77. Employees will be expected to continue to carry out the duties of their substantive post and to fulfil their normal contracted hours on the days not allocated for study and outside of university term time, in accordance with their contract of employment.
78. Employees will be required to provide Wiltshire Council with proof of successful module completion, when requested.

After qualifying

79. Upon successful completion of the programme and upon gaining Qualified Social Worker status, employees will be expected to actively seek and apply for a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) vacant position with Wiltshire Council on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme. They will be subject to an interview process before being offered employment as a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW). In the event of a post being offered, it is expected that they will accept the employment offer.
80. Post-qualification and until the employee secures a Newly Qualified Social Worker position, they will continue to fulfil the role in which they are employed under their contract of employment.
81. If the employee is not successful in completing the qualification or in securing a Newly Qualified Social Worker position, they will remain in their substantive post.

Equal Opportunities

This policy has been [Equality Impact Assessed](#) to identify opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups.

Managers will make any necessary adjustments to ensure that all employees are treated fairly. For further information see the [guidance on equal opportunities](#).

Advice and guidance

If you require help in accessing or understanding this policy, you should contact your line manager or trade union representative if you are a member.

If, due to the nature of your query, it is not appropriate to contact your line manager you should contact your Head of Service who will nominate an appropriate manager or colleague to help you.

Further information

There are a number of related policies and procedures that you should be aware of including:

- [Career break policy](#)
- [Time to train policy](#)
- [Learning and development policy](#)
- [Professional qualification learning loans policy](#)
- [Assessed and Supported Year in Employment \(ASYE\) policy](#)
- [Equality and Diversity policy and procedure](#)

For further information please speak to your supervisor, manager, service director or contact your [HR advisor](#).