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# Health & Social Care

Regulated qualifications, Level 2 to Level 5

A complete pathway in care, mental health, counselling and healthcare support – aligned with Skills for Care and NHS standards.

## AT A GLANCE

Levels	Level 2 to Level 5
Awarding bodies	TQUK, NCFE, Focus
Duration	3 to 24 months
Study mode	100% online
Funding	Pay monthly available

TRUSTED BY 4.5 MILLION+ LEARNERS

Ofqual regulated

TQUK accredited

CQC recognised

Skills for Care aligned

## Speak to a course advisor

Free advice, no obligation. Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 6:00pm.

CALL US ON  
**01202 006 464**

## A WORD FROM US

# Why we built this faculty

Adult social care is the UK's largest employment sector and one of the fastest-growing. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and the Care Quality Commission's State of Care reports both highlight a sustained increase in demand for skilled, qualified care workers over the coming decade.

Behind those headlines are real people who want a career that is meaningful, stable, and recognised. This faculty exists to give them the most direct online route into that career – from an entry-level Level 2 certificate, through the Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care that the sector now treats as the benchmark, all the way to the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Adult Care required by CQC registered managers.

Every qualification in this guide is regulated by Ofqual and awarded by recognised awarding organisations – including TQUK, NCFE, and Focus Awards. Skills for Care endorses the design of our Level 3 and Level 5 diplomas, and our tutors all bring direct care-sector experience to every learner relationship.

If you have any questions after reading this guide, our care advisors are available Monday to Friday on 01202 006 464.

**"The adult social care workforce in England stands at around 1.52 million people, with around 152,000 posts vacant at any given time. A well-qualified workforce is the single most important factor in care quality."**

Adapted from Skills for Care – State of the Adult Social Care Sector 2023

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## A NOTE ON STUDY TIME

Most Level 3 learners complete their diploma in 12 to 18 months alongside at least 16 hours per week of paid care work. Level 2 certificates typically take 3 to 6 months. Level 5 leadership diplomas are designed for working managers and usually take 18 to 24 months.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

# Why care now

Adult social care employs approximately 1.52 million people across England alone, making it comparable in scale to the NHS itself. The sector supports older people, adults with physical and learning disabilities, those living with mental health conditions, and individuals requiring end-of-life care.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, published in 2023, identified adult social care as a critical pipeline for the wider health system. Skills for Care's annual workforce survey consistently reports a vacancy rate of around 9.9% – one of the highest of any sector in the UK economy.

Pay has risen substantially since 2020. A newly qualified Level 3 graduate entering a Senior Care Worker role can typically expect a salary in the region of £24,000 to £30,000. Managers with Level 5 leadership qualifications command £32,000 to £48,000 or more.

**1.52m+**

adult social care  
workers in England

**152,000**

vacancies at  
any given time

**£18–48k**

typical pay band  
Level 2 to Level 5

Sources: Skills for Care 2023 (skillsforcare.org.uk) · NHS Long Term Workforce Plan 2023 (england.nhs.uk)

## YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY

# The four-level pathway

Four clear qualification levels take you from an introductory certificate to a senior leadership diploma. Each is a nationally recognised, Ofqual-regulated qualification.

## Level 2

### Adult Social Care Certificate

The entry point. Covers core values, person-centred practice, safeguarding principles, and communication skills. Typically 3 to 6 months. Ideal for career changers with no prior care experience.

## Level 3

### Diploma in Adult Care (RQF)

The sector benchmark. Covers care planning, mental health, medication, and dementia care in depth. Required for most Senior Care Worker roles and the minimum for CQC-registered settings.

## Level 4

### Specialist / supervisory routes

Foot Health Practitioner clinical route or early Leadership and Management certificate. Suited to experienced care workers moving into specialist or junior management roles.

## Level 5

### Leadership & Management for Adult Care

The senior leadership qualification. Required for CQC Registered Manager registration and the benchmark for Deputy Manager and Service Manager appointments.

## HONEST FIT CHECK

# Is this faculty for you?

Health and social care is deeply rewarding – and demanding. Here's a candid look at who tends to thrive in this faculty, and who may be better served elsewhere.

## THIS IS FOR YOU IF

- ✓ You want a stable, in-demand career
- ✓ You're a career changer from retail, hospitality, or administration
- ✓ You already work in care and need formal recognition
- ✓ You're a working manager aiming for Level 5
- ✓ You can commit to 6–10 hours per week of online study
- ✓ You have access to or already work in a care setting

## CONSIDER ANOTHER PATH IF

- You want a nursing degree – apply via UCAS
- You prefer classroom-only learning – try local FE
- You can't access a care work setting for Level 3+
- You're under 18 – we offer learners 19 and above
- You need a same-week placement – we focus on online theory
- You want a regulated medical role (e.g., doctor, paramedic)

Not sure? Call us on 01202 006 464 – we'll give you an honest answer, even if the answer is 'not us'.

## THE PORTFOLIO

# Qualifications you can earn

Every qualification below is Ofqual-regulated and awarded by an approved organisation. All are accepted by CQC-registered employers across England.

Qualification	Awarding body	Level	Duration
Adult Social Care Certificate	TQUK	2	3–6 months
Counselling Skills Award	TQUK	2	3–5 months
Diploma in Adult Care (RQF)	TQUK	3	12–18 months
Healthcare Support Services Diploma	TQUK	3	12–18 months
Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care	TQUK	3	6–12 months
Mental Health & Counselling Diploma	TQUK	3	9–15 months
Certificate in Understanding Mental Health	TQUK	3	4–8 months
Certificate: Principles of Dementia Care	TQUK	3	4–8 months
Certificate in End of Life Care	TQUK	3	4–6 months
Diploma for Foot Health Care Practitioner	Innovate	4	9–15 months
Foot Health Top-Up	SEG Awards	4	6–9 months
Leadership & Management for Adult Care	TQUK	5	18–24 months

Durations assume 16+ hours per week in a care setting for workplace-assessed courses.

## STARTING POINTS

# Featured Level 2 and 3 courses

Level 2 is the natural entry point for anyone new to care. Level 3 is the sector benchmark for Senior Care Workers and the minimum expectation in CQC-registered settings.

LEVEL 2 · TQUK · OFQUAL REGULATED

## Adult Social Care Certificate

3 to 6 months · no prior experience required

The essential foundation for anyone wanting to work in adult social care. Covers the fundamental values of care, safeguarding awareness, effective communication, and health and safety. No placement required.

- ✓ Safeguarding from abuse and neglect
- ✓ Communication in care
- ✓ Equality, diversity, inclusion
- ✓ Person-centred values
- ✓ Health, safety, well-being
- ✓ Duty of care

LEVEL 3 · TQUK · SKILLS FOR CARE ALIGNED

## Diploma in Adult Care (RQF)

12 to 18 months · 16+ hours per week in a care setting

The flagship qualification for adult social care, required for most Senior Care Worker roles and the minimum expectation for CQC-registered employers. Workplace portfolio evidence is central.

- ✓ Care planning and review
- ✓ Medication: safe handling
- ✓ Dementia care
- ✓ Safeguarding legislation
- ✓ Mental health awareness
- ✓ Person-centred support

## SENIOR ROUTES

# Featured Level 4 and 5 routes

Senior roles – Deputy Manager, Service Manager, Registered Manager – require Level 4 or Level 5 qualifications. Most learners study these alongside full-time work.

LEVEL 5 · TQUK · CQC RECOGNISED

## Diploma in Leadership & Management for Adult Care

18 to 24 months · working in a supervisory or management role

Required for CQC Registered Manager registration and the benchmark for senior management roles. Covers organisational leadership, quality assurance, governance, and team development.

- ✓ Strategic leadership in care
- ✓ Safeguarding and risk
- ✓ Quality assurance frameworks
- ✓ Managing teams and performance
- ✓ Governance and compliance
- ✓ Financial management

LEVEL 4 · INNOVATE AWARDING · CLINICAL ROUTE

## Diploma for Foot Health Care Practitioner

9 to 15 months · combine theory with practical placement

A clinical specialist qualification for those wanting to practise as a Foot Health Practitioner. Covers anatomy, common foot pathologies, treatment techniques, and clinic management.

- ✓ Foot anatomy and pathology
- ✓ Infection control in clinic
- ✓ Clinic management basics
- ✓ Treatment techniques
- ✓ Patient assessment
- ✓ Insurance and registration

## THE EXPERIENCE

# How you'll study

Every learner gets a personal tutor with direct care-sector experience, a structured online learning environment, and a clear support framework. Here is what you can expect.

## 01

### Personal tutor

A qualified assessor with hands-on care experience marks every assignment, returns written feedback within five working days, and runs scheduled one-to-one check-ins.

## 02

### Flexible online learning

Login any time, study at your own pace. All learning resources, videos, and assignment submissions live in your dashboard. Mobile-optimised for shift workers.

## 03

### Portfolio assessment

No timed written exams. Assessment is by assignment and workplace portfolio. Your tutor checks all evidence before submission to the awarding body.

#### TYPICAL WEEK

2 hours reading and video lessons · 3 hours assignment work · 1 tutor check-in (phone/email/video)  
2 hours workplace evidence gathering (Level 3 and above)

## WHERE IT LEADS

# Career outcomes and salary

Care sector pay has risen substantially since 2020. The introduction of the Real Living Wage as the minimum, combined with employer competition, means that qualifications now translate directly to better pay.

Role	Required level	UK salary range
Care Worker / Healthcare Assistant	Level 2	£18,000 – £22,000
Senior Care Worker	Level 3	£22,000 – £27,000
Care Coordinator	Level 3	£25,000 – £31,000
Foot Health Practitioner	Level 4	£28,000 – £42,000
Deputy Manager	Level 5	£30,000 – £38,000
Registered Manager	Level 5	£35,000 – £48,000
Service Manager / Regional Manager	Level 5+	£42,000 – £58,000

Sources: Skills for Care 2023, NHS Jobs UK aggregated data, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2024.

## IN THEIR WORDS

# Real learner stories

Illustrative accounts based on typical learner journeys. Names and details generalised for privacy.



I'd been working in care for three years without a formal qualification. The online format made the difference – I could study at 10pm after the kids were in bed. I passed in 14 months and was promoted to Senior Care Worker the following month.

**Sarah**

Senior Care Worker, residential home, Yorkshire

Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care



I left the Army at 42 with no civilian qualifications. A friend suggested social care and I enrolled on the Level 2 just to see if I liked it. I did – and 18 months later I had my Level 3 and a job as a care coordinator.

**Marcus**

Care Coordinator, supported living, West Midlands

Level 2 Certificate then Level 3 Diploma



My organisation funded my Level 5 after the CQC inspection flagged it. The governance modules were challenging, but my tutor understood the pressures of running a service. I completed in 22 months and was confirmed as Registered Manager three months later.

**Diane**

Registered Manager, domiciliary care, Hampshire

Level 5 Leadership & Management

## COSTS AND FUNDING

# Funding and payment options

Most qualifications are eligible for one or more funding options. Fees are kept competitive and flexible for learners who cannot pay the full amount upfront.

## Advanced Learner Loan

Level 3 and 5 courses are eligible for a loan from Student Finance England. Covers fees in full, repayable only when earning above £25,000.

## Employer sponsorship

Many care employers fund Level 3 and 5 study. We provide a sponsorship pack with course overview and a template letter for the internal business case.

## 0% interest instalments

If self-funding, spread payments over 3, 6, or 12 months at no extra cost. A typical Level 3 Diploma costs £750 to £950 (check current pricing with your advisor).

## 14-day money-back guarantee

Decide within 14 calendar days that the course is not right and we'll refund your fees in full. Applies to both self-funded and instalment plans.

### ELIGIBILITY

Advanced Learner Loans require age 19+, ordinarily resident in England, and enrolment on a Level 3+ qualification. EU/EEA/Swiss nationals UK-resident for three years may also be eligible. Your advisor will confirm.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

# Three steps to get started

Enrolling is straightforward. There are no entry tests, no interview, and no waiting list. Most learners go from first call to first lesson in under 48 hours.

**01**

### **Pick your level**

Not sure? Call us – that's what our advisors are for. They'll match you to the right course in 10 minutes.

**02**

### **Free advisor call**

Confirm your course, check funding eligibility, and walk through what your first weeks will look like.

**03**

### **Enrol and start**

Complete the online enrolment, sort payment or loan, and access your learning materials within 48 hours.

TALK TO US

**Ready to take the next step?**

**01202 006 464**

courseadvisor@learndirect.com · Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6:00pm

**Visit [learndirect.com](https://www.learndirect.com)**

to browse all courses