



UNIT-1

What is Health and Social Care?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

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Unit 1

What is Health and Social Care?

As caring and compassionate human beings, it is our duty to ensure that friends and loved ones are provided with appropriate care in times of need. There are also instances where our own health and social care requirements must be considered and acknowledged, which has the potential to be even more challenging.

Getting to grips with the basics of health and social care is about more than simply researching the various options available. Particularly if you have no prior knowledge or experience of such matters, even knowing where to start can be difficult.

This is why many families find themselves attempting to balance busy lifestyles (raising children, working fulltime jobs etc.) with the provision of appropriate care for themselves or their loved ones. Oftentimes, they take responsibility for caring for those who require social assistance or medical intervention, despite lacking the time, knowledge, resources or professional support *they* need.

Accessing the right care at the right time isn't easy, as the vast majority of hospitals, nurses, doctors and so on already have packed workloads. In addition, the sheer scope of options available via social care services can make the whole thing overwhelming.

In almost all instances, your GP and local social services department should be your first port of call, when you need to make any important decisions regarding health and social care. Nevertheless, developing a detailed knowledge of the concept of health and social care can make it an easier subject to approach and improve your likelihood of making the right decision.

What is Health and Social Care?

The term 'health and social care' can be somewhat misleading in its own right, given the fact that these are actually two completely separate systems overseen by two separate bodies:

- The government is responsible for healthcare in the United Kingdom
- Local authorities administer social care in the United Kingdom

This two-system approach to health and social care often leads to a lack of cohesion, making it difficult to know who to turn to for support and for answers to your questions.

Healthcare

Each of the countries of the United Kingdom has its own semi-independent healthcare system. Each of which comprises a component of the collective NHS – the public healthcare system of the United Kingdom. The NHS is a publicly funded healthcare system, though also works closely with private sector organisations and voluntary contributors for the provision of services.

The nature of the public healthcare system in United Kingdom is such that *all* essential healthcare requirements can be covered 100% free of charge, when provided or funded by the NHS. In most instances, the primary entry-point to the healthcare system of United Kingdom is a general practitioner (GP), who may provide a diagnosis or refer your case on to a specialist.

Social Care

Most people understand the basics of healthcare in the United Kingdom, though struggle when it comes to the fundamentals of social care. This is because the social care system doesn't have such a clear or obvious entry-point. There are numerous agencies and providers covering an extremely varied scope of requirements – everything from end of life care to youth work to child protection.

The social care system of United Kingdom exists to ensure that those who are in need of help or are in a vulnerable position of any kind are provided with appropriate support. Such vulnerabilities extend to various types of disabilities, psychological health problems and poverty.

Essentially, these services come together to create a 'safety net' of sorts for society. One that ensures those in need are adequately supported at the right time and in an appropriate way, courtesy of a system that has been around in one form or another for centuries.

In a typical everyday example, an adult with physical and/or psychological health problems may need help with many aspects of their daily life. From getting dressed in the morning to eating an appropriate diet to obtaining the medication they need and so on, adult social care may be necessary for a variety of reasons.

The fact that the UK's population is both growing and aging is resulting in rapidly accelerating demand for age-related social care. But where social care differs from the NHS is in the fact that it isn't always provided free of charge. Recipients of social care are expected to contribute to the costs of their care, calculated in accordance with their financial circumstances.

However, those who do not have the financial means to contribute will *not* be denied the social care they need. It is the responsibility of local government to oversee both the provision and

funding of social care, along with the extent to which those receiving support are expected to contribute.

Care Services

The extent to which care services will be recommended and/or provided in any given case will be determined by the outcome of a formal 'care needs assessment'. The process usually begins with a visit to a GP, who may provide direct recommendations or refer the patient on for further investigations at a hospital.

Care services are organised and overseen by local government. In accordance with the requirements of the individual, a wide variety of care services may be considered, including but not limited to day centre access, community support, information services, home alterations to maintain independence, in-home care or permanent residential care.

Again, it's the important to remember that in most (or all) such instances, the individual receiving the care will be expected to contribute to the costs. Though the amount you will be required to pay will be determined on the basis of your financial situation – you will not be denied care if you cannot afford to contribute.

Care and Support Needs Assessment

If you believe that a care and support needs assessment should be carried out for either yourself or for a loved one, you will need to contact your local authority to get the assessment underway.

After which, you will be provided with a detailed summary of the assessment's findings, along with advice and suggestions from your local authority as to suitable services and support pathways.

Developing a Health and Social Care Plan

The development of an individualised care plan follows the support needs assessment, in the event that the individual in question is deemed to require any kind of support. This is a bespoke plan created around your unique care requirements, with a degree of flexibility to take your preferences and priorities into account.

Some of the key areas covered in an individualised care plan include the following:

- *Your specific care needs that have been identified*
- *Suggestions and recommendations for meeting these needs*
- *How your needs will be met by your local authority*
- *Financial information including your budget*
- *Predictions regarding the future of your care requirements*

Ultimately, it is the goal of every individualised care plan to ensure the named individual is supported appropriately. This means focusing primarily on:

- *Supporting and encouraging them to stay independent*
- *Giving them maximum control over their everyday life*
- *Ensuring they remain an equal participant in society*
- *Maintaining their access to family life and employment*
- *Helping the named individual maintain their self-respect*
- *Doing what's necessary to ensure their best possible quality of life*

The creation of a social care plan results in something of a 'road map' for the immediate and ongoing support the individual in question needs. Every individualised support plan is 100% unique, though will often include suggestions or recommendations regarding the following:

Community Activities

The purpose of community activity support is to ensure that those affected are able to maintain meaningful connections with their community. Recommendations could therefore include attending sporting events, cultural engagements and social functions, or could be as simple as providing a community transport service to help the individual get out and about.

Day Centres

These specialist facilities enable people from a wide variety of backgrounds to come together, socialise and take part in fulfilling activities. Day centres can also provide a certain amount of respite for carers, relieving them of their responsibilities for a few hours at least.

Equipment and Home Adaptations

This is where local authorities recommend and organise physical alterations to the property in which the individual lives. Home adaptations can be as simple as grab bar installations in key areas, or could involve the widening of doors and the installation of a barrier-free bathroom for a wheelchair user.

There are many instances where home adaptations can alleviate the requirement for the individual to move into residential care, or require intensive in-home support to continue living in their own home.

Elderly Care

Improved lifestyles and advances in medical science are leading to much higher average life expectancies all over the world. The result of which is the rapidly accelerating requirement for effective and affordable elderly care, which ranges from occasional home visits to full-time support and care home residency.

As above, elderly care requirements need to be considered as carefully and proactively as possible, as it is often unnecessary for the individual in question to move into permanent residential care. If the appropriate care and support is provided at the right time, they may have every opportunity to maintain their independence.

Domiciliary Care

This refers to the provision of in-home care, enabling those with significant care requirements to continue living in their own homes. It's an extremely popular option in the United Kingdom, with approximately 875,000 people choosing domiciliary care over moving into residential care.

The provision of domiciliary care will often incorporate a variety of home adaptations, which may be necessary to enable the occupant to continue living there.

Convalescent Care

This refers to the temporary provision of care an individual of any age may require while recovering from an illness, injury or surgery. The NHS is committed to ensuring *all* patients recover as quickly and completely as possible, regaining their independence with the help and support of trained carers.

Convalescent care varies from short-term support with certain tasks to much longer-term rehabilitation, which may be provided in the patient's home or at a specialist facility if required.

Visiting Care

Many of those who undergo a care and support needs assessment are deemed to be predominantly independent, though in need of occasional or frequent support with certain activities.

Those who provide visiting care cover a wide variety of requirements for those they work with – anything from helping them dress to cooking meals to assisting with cleanliness and hygiene around the home.

Live in Care

This has a tendency to be one of the most expensive forms of social care, and is therefore online provided and funded by local authorities in relatively rare cases. However, the vast majority of people who need 24/7 care would most likely prefer to remain in their homes – particularly if they live close to friends and family.

Live-in care provides the individual in question with the 24/7 support of a trained and experienced specialist, who lives in their property with them.

Overnight Care

It's not uncommon for an individual with care requirements to need more support overnight than during the day. Whether it's administering medication, assisting with trips to the toilet or helping with pre-bed routines, overnight carers offer essential care that goes beyond the usual office hours.

Importantly, the presence of an experienced professional who can help in the event of an accident or emergency overnight can be particularly reassuring.

Nursing Care

Specialist nursing care is provided when an individual requires extremely and often complex support, in accordance with their severe or chronic health issues. For example, an individual with an acquired brain injury or advanced Alzheimer's may need the 24/7 support of trained and qualified nursing staff, who can confidently manage their complex requirements.

Such care will almost always be provided in a residential facility, though in some instances may be offered as a form of in-home care.

Emergency Care

Even with the best intentions, there may come a time when you are unable to provide the care your friend or relative needs. An accident, illness or emergency of any kind could render you incapable of supporting them at dangerously short notice.

This is why emergency care exists, which is designed to 'fill in' for the services of a primary carer when the unexpected occurs. Emergency care covers the vast majority of requirements for adults and children of all ages, and can often be arranged with almost no notice whatsoever.

Respite Care

The primary carer of a friend or family member may request respite care support from time to time. This is where the carer in question wants or needs to take a break from the support they provide, for the benefit of their own wellbeing and health.

Unlike emergency care, respite care is something that needs to be planned for and organised in advance. It's also necessary to have a good reason to qualify for respite care and to demonstrate that the break is necessary, for the benefit of everyone involved.

Extra Care

This is the bracket within which both sheltered housing and retirement housing fall, wherein those concerned don't need particularly intensive or extensive care, but require a certain level of support with their everyday activities.

Extra care may be recommended or provided when residential or nursing home care isn't necessary, but fully independent living is also no longer an option. You maintain a certain amount of independence, though with the added reassurance of a trained staff on site at all times, to help you out when needed.

Condition-Led Care

As the name suggests, this is where the care provided is based primarily on the medical condition the individual in question is diagnosed with.

Trained carers are brought in to fulfil the requirements of a custom care plan, which may be drawn up when an individual is diagnosed with a condition such as multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy, or has a severe learning or developmental disability.

Dementia Care

It's currently estimated that more than 850,000 people in the United Kingdom suffer from dementia. The extent to which a dementia patient requires care and support will be determined by how advanced the condition is and the appropriateness/safety of their current living arrangements.

Home care is almost always the preferred option for dementia patients and their families – particularly during the early stages of the condition. Familiar surroundings and the avoidance of a stressful transition into a care environment can help those affected and their families cope with this devastating disease.

As each case of dementia is fundamentally unique, so too are the care requirements of those affected.

Palliative or End of Life Care

Discussing palliative care (aka end of life care) can be extremely difficult – particularly when it involves a loved one or you yourself. Everyone deserves to be provided best possible care when suffering from a terminal illness, ensuring their comfort, dignity and life-quality through life's most challenging time.

Palliative care must be holistic to be successful, combining spiritual and psychological support with coverage of all conventional medical care requirements.

Support for Carers

Many people who support friends and family members don't consider themselves to be doing anything other than what's naturally expected of them. They certainly would not classify themselves as 'carers' in the traditional sense.

Nevertheless, anyone who takes care of another person who has a long-term health issue, a disability or age-related care requirements of any kind *is* a carer. In which case, it is essential to ensure you understand *your* entitlements and take the necessary steps to ensure that you receive the support you need.

Organise a 'carers assessment' with your local authority to find out what kind of support you may be entitled to, along with what kind of additional or specialist support may be available for the individual you care for.

How Much Does Health and Social Care Cost?

The social care system in the United Kingdom is such that nobody will (or should) be denied the support they need for purely financial reasons. However, the social care system doesn't work in quite the same way as the NHS. Depending on the care requirements of an individual and their financial situation, they may be required to cover some of the costs, all of the costs or none of the costs of their care.

A system of means testing has been introduced to assess the financial circumstances of those deemed in need of social care, in order to determine how much they can afford to pay. It is an imperfect system some have labelled discriminatory, as it is based entirely on your collective wealth at the time.

Even if you've been paying National Insurance contributions for your entire life, the social care system will take every penny of your savings *and* your assets, if their collective value can cover the costs of your care. By contrast, an individual who's never made a tax or National Insurance contribution and has no assets or savings will have all of their costs covered by the state.

The actual costs of any given program of social care will always vary significantly from one individual and case to the next. Though it is important to be aware of the fact that means testing applies in all instances, and you may be expected to contribute to the costs of your care – in-part or in-full.

The Role of the Social Care Worker

Working in social care can be challenging and rewarding in equal measures. Upon becoming a social care worker (or general care worker) of any kind, you immediately assume a wide range of responsibilities on behalf of those you support.

It becomes *your* obligation to ensure those in need of support (and often their families) are provided with everything they need to enjoy the best possible quality of life.

However, working directly with individuals and families is only one part of the social care worker's job description. The social care worker will also be expected to act as a liaison between the people they care for and the various providers and professionals involved in their care and support.

For example, the social worker will be expected to collaborate and consult with doctors, nurses and other specialists, on behalf of the people they work with.

The emotional aspects of social care work can be particularly challenging, as carers naturally build strong connections with those they care for. Keeping emotions and objectivity separate is never easy, but is nonetheless essential in roles like these. In addition, social care isn't a field that has any defined 'office hours' or fixed working schedules. Those who provide essential care are expected to provide it when and where it is needed, meaning the prospect of dynamic working hours and a lot of overtime.

However, social care is a field which kind, compassionate and hard-working individuals explore primarily for its intangible benefits. Providing help and support for those in need can be incredibly rewarding and inspiring, but it is a career reserved exclusively for those with a very specific character and skills set.

Skills Needed to Work in Social Care

Much of the technicalities involved in a career in social care can be acquired through conventional education. There are both skilled and unskilled roles within the field, just as there are positions for formally qualified and unqualified individuals.

While some study the social care profession to degree level or beyond, others pursue entry-level positions and work their way through the ranks. Experience often proving more effective than formal education, when looking to build a rewarding career in social care.

Though there's no formal definition or distinction, the difference between a social worker and a social care worker is primarily academic in nature. Social workers usually need an honours degree to practise, whereas social care workers tend to offer more personal care.

In all instances, however, there are certain skills and character traits needed to succeed as a social worker. A few of the most prominent examples of which being as follows:

- **Active Listening Skills** — This means understanding and appreciating the difference between hearing somebody and actually *listening* to what they have to say, while at the same time interpreting the non-verbal cues of the speaker.
- **Social Perceptiveness** — It is important to be aware of the reactions and potential reactions of other people, while acknowledging the reasons different people react in different ways.
- **Communication** — Much of the work involved in social care is communication oriented, making it imperative to have confident and relatively advanced communication skills.
- **Critical Thinking** — This refers to a person's capacity to use reasoning and logic to identify strengths and weaknesses, when considering solutions to issues or deciding on a course of action.
- **Flexibility** — Essential in the field of social care, as every person you work with will be different and it is impossible to predict what each working day (or even hour) will bring your way.
- **Reading and Writing** — Again, a great deal of a social worker's everyday workload will be administrative in nature, calling for highly developed reading and writing skills.
- **Tenacity and Motivation** — The social care worker should be constantly searching for ways to help people better, while refusing to accept failure or second best as an option for those they work with.

- **Problem Solving Skills** – A constant stream of problems to solve and issues to address is the norm in the field of social care, which in all instances must be addressed promptly and confidently by the social care worker.
- **Confident Decision-Making** – It is often necessary to make important and potentially life-changing decisions on behalf of others, calling for confident and comprehensively logical decision-making skills.

Along with the above, social care workers also need the specialist skills, knowledge and experience required to provide whichever aspect of care they intend to specialise in.

For example, a care worker who assists with the administration of medication or the dressing of wounds will need a different skills set to a carer who exclusively provides help with basic domestic chores.

Specialisations in Social Care

As previously touched upon, the social care sector in the United Kingdom is extremely broad and diverse. It encompasses a wide variety of specialist areas, within which social care providers will usually provide their services exclusively. Some social care workers are qualified and experienced enough to provide support across multiple specialist areas, though most focus primarily or exclusively on one specialisation.

There are no formal classifications or categorisations of the different types of social care, though most of the services provided by social care workers could be bracketed within one of the following categories:

- **Administration and Management**
- **Advocacy and Community**
- **Aging**
- **Child Welfare**
- **Developmental Disabilities**
- **Health Care**
- **Justice and Legal**
- **Mental Health and Clinical Social Work**
- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse**
- **Occupational and Employee Assistance**
- **Policy and Planning**
- **Politics**
- **Public Welfare**
- **Research**
- **School Social Work**

As for specific careers, just a few examples of typical job titles in the field of social care include the following among others:

- Activities Worker
- Care Worker
- Personal Assistant
- Rehabilitation Worker
- Shared Lives Carer
- Advocacy Worker
- Support Worker
- Social Worker
- Housing Officer
- Care Assistant
- Health Visitor

Everyday duties will understandably vary significantly from one role to the next. While some care workers play a comprehensively hands-on role in the lives of those they support, others work in a more behind-the-scenes capacity.

The following duties will therefore not apply in all instances, but nonetheless provide a brief insight into some of the responsibilities assumed by the social care worker:

- Organising and taking part in assessments to ensure that the people they work with have their needs accurately identified and subsequently addressed
- Helping people make important decisions regarding their residency, their healthcare, their medication/treatment requirements and so on
- Taking part in investigations regarding potential neglect, abuse or concerns raised about persons living in poverty
- Arranging places for sick and elderly persons at residential care facilities and assisting with the relocation process
- Monitoring and assessing the progress made by clients in a variety of areas to establish the effectiveness of the support measures being provided
- Reporting back to more senior personnel within the social care system and liaising with a variety of professionals and specialists
- Proactively seeking ways to improve the care and support being provided at all times, while ensuring clients understand the options available to them
- Serving as a primary point of contact for clients and having the knowledge, insights and information needed to answer their questions clearly and promptly

As previously touched upon, it takes a very specific type of person to build a successful career in the field of social care.

More than just a job, social care becomes a lifestyle in its own right.