

What core skills do I need to work in social care?

Every role in social care will require you have a certain set of skills.

Some of these will be specific to the job you are applying for. However, there are some skills that all social care workers need; these are called core skills.

Core skills include

- English skills
- number skills
- digital skills
- employability skills including team work and problem solving.

You might also recognise these as 'transferable' or 'life' skills.

This guide will

- outline what core skills you need to work in social care
- give you practical examples of how you might use these skills in your day to day role
- ask you to reflect on how you already use these skills, including writing an answer to a mock interview question using the STAR method
- give you practical ideas and examples to help you develop your core skills.

Core skills

Core skills include English, maths and digital skills, as well as employability skills such as the ability to work in a team and problem solve.

English skills

include the ability to:

- read
- write
- speak
- listen.

They can be used to:

- communicate with people
- write a care plan
- read and follow a risk assessment
- report an incident or accident.



Digital skills

include the ability to:

- find and manage digital information
- share personal data digitally
- use digital technology with people using services
- make use of elearning.

They can be used to:

- update digital handover notes
- use remote monitoring systems
- use assistive technologies.



Number skills

include the ability to:

- do calculations
- record numbers
- understand measurements
- use timetables and plan work.

They can be used to:

- record fluid intake and outputs
- count medication
- measure and record weight
- calculate staff wages.



Employability skills

include the ability to:

- problem solve
- work in a team
- plan own learning and development
- manage own health and well being.

They can be used to:

- prioritise work loads
- manage work/home life balance
- respond well to challenging behaviour
- adapt to changing demands at work.



Demonstrating your core skills

You might not have experience of working in a social care role, but you might have lots of other experience that demonstrate that you have these skills. You could draw on experiences from

- a hobby
- volunteering or work experience
- your home life
- a previous job (part time or full time)
- or from everyday living.

Have a think about some of the skills above and write down some examples of where you have used these skills.

English skills

Here are some examples of past experiences when you may have used English skills.

'In sixth form, I mentored someone in a younger year. This involved providing advice about their options and existing subjects. It required me to communicate verbally one to one. I listened to what they had to say and responded appropriately, providing impartial advice and showing empathy to their situation.'

'I did work experience with an estate agents. This involved me communicating with customers. I responded to emails, reading what they said and writing an appropriate response via email or letter. I also dealt with customers face to face and over the phone.'

Skill	Your experience
Reading, writing speaking and listening	

For one of your examples above, think about a specific situation where you have used English skills and write a more detailed answer. Use STAR to structure your answers.

Your experience	
Situation – what was the situation	
Task – what was the task or objective	
Action – what action did you take to achieve the task	
Result – what happened as the result of your action	

Here are some examples of how you could develop your English skills to help you when starting your career in social care.

- Start a blog writing about something you're interested in.
- Write an article for a local newspaper, your community group, your school or college.
- Volunteer in a role that allows you to communicate with different people.
- Complete a relevant course or qualification.

Number skills

Here are some examples of past experiences when you may have used number skills.

'Whilst revising for my exams, I developed a time table for revision to manage my time. This involved me allocating time slots for revision around other tasks I needed to do.'

'One of my hobbies is cooking and baking. This involves careful measurement and pouring of ingredients.'

Skill	Your experience
Do calculations, record numbers, understand measurements and use timetables	

For one of your examples above, think about a specific situation where you have used number skills and write a more detailed answer. Use STAR to structure your answers.

Your experience	
Situation – what was the situation	
Task – what was the task or objective	
Action – what action did you take to achieve the task	
Result – what happened as the result of your action	

Here are some examples of how you could develop your number skills to help you when starting your career in social care.

- Take on extra responsibilities at work. For example if you work in a shop, offer to help with invoicing or cashing up at the end of the day.
- Use the [BBC Skillswise](#) website to develop your number skills.

Digital skills

Here are some examples of past experiences when you may have used number skills.

'As a student rep, I was responsible for organising social activities for my peers. I used the internet to find local activities, including information about accessibility and opening times. Once I had found an activity, I would check review websites and price comparison websites to get the best deal.'

'I volunteer at a local group that helps older people learn how to use a computer. This involves me sitting with them and showing them how to turn a computer on, use the internet, write in a word document, set up an email account and use Facebook.'

Skill	Your experience
Find and manage information digitally, share personal data digitally and use digital technology with people who need care and support.	

For one of your examples above, think about a specific situation where you have used digital skills and write a more detailed answer. Use STAR to structure your answers.

Your experience	
Situation – what was the situation	
Task – what was the task or objective	
Action – what action did you take to achieve the task	
Result – what happened as the result of your action	

Here are some examples of how you could develop your digital skills to help you when starting your career in social care.

- Offer to support a local fundraising activity and use the internet to find sponsors and promote the event.
- Find a local support group that helps older people keep in touch with relatives online.
- Use Microsoft word or another digital system in a project and be able to show examples of what you did.

Employability skills

Here are some examples of past experiences when you may have used number skills.

'At school I worked with 5 other students on a group project. Within the group I assumed the role as organiser and delegated tasks within the group. I ensured everyone stuck to the time table, and I also completed my own tasks.'

Skill	Your experience
Problem solve, team work, managing own learning and development and managing own health and wellbeing	

For one of your examples above, think about a specific situation where you have used employability skills and write a more detailed answer. Use STAR to structure your answers.

Your experience	
Situation – what was the situation	
Task – what was the task or objective	
Action – what action did you take to achieve the task	
Result – what happened as the result of your action	

Here are some examples of how you could develop your employability skills to help you when starting your career in social care.

- Join a club or team sport to demonstrate how you work in a team.
- Think about what skills and experience you currently have and where you need to develop. Put an action plan together of how you can do this – employers like people who are keen to learn and develop.
- If you're at school or college, volunteer at an open day.
- Become a student representative or join your local community group. Contribute to discussions and make suggestions to the group.