COMMUNITY, SOCIAL WORK & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sector Background

Community

The sector comes under the remit of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, who provide operational funding to the many organisations within it. Occupations found in the sector range from humanitarian aid workers, to youth workers, charity officers to community development workers.

Much of the work of Community and Local Development groups happens in communities, dealing with some of Ireland’s most serious social and economic problems. The work is focused on empowering marginalised people of all ages and communities towards finding and applying their own solutions to their problems. People who choose to work in the community sector are usually motivated by positive change within the community. Work in this area requires commitment, dedication and practical skills. People of all levels of qualification and experience work within the sector.

Social & Caring

This sector includes careers and professions associated with providing help, care and support, and improving quality of life, across the general community. People in these professions work with children, young people, families - those from all backgrounds who experience marginalisation or disadvantage, or who have special needs and require extra help to cope with everyday living.

Social Work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people's lives. Social Workers are professionally qualified. They assess the needs of their clients and plan and implement individual packages of care best suited to them. To do this requires building relationships and supporting people to enable them to realise their potential, take control of their lives and live as independently and safely as possible.

There are numerous specialty practice sections in the field:

- Adoption & Fostering
- Children, Adolescent & Adult Mental Health
- Children and families
- Disability
- Elderly
Social Care Workers are typically employed to support Social Workers in implementing care packages. They do this by providing the practical and emotional support recommended under the care plan.

This may involve working in a person’s home, in a day-care centre, community centre or residential or nursing home. Social Care Practitioners may be working with children or adolescents in residential care; people with learning or physical disabilities; people who are homeless; people with alcohol/drug dependency; families in community; older people; recent immigrants to Ireland, among others.

Responsibilities range from providing personal care, such as washing, dressing, feeding and toileting, to assisting with the delivery of activity programmes in day-care centres or nursing homes, through to managing a team of Social Care Workers in any of these settings.

**International Development**

The aim of development is broadly understood as being about the improvement of quality of life in a world characterised by unprecedented opulence, but also by widespread deprivation, destitution and poverty. Development, however, is about more than higher incomes – it is a multi-dimensional process of change in social structures, posing challenges in such areas as the reduction of inequality and inclusion, the expansion of the range of economic and social choices, the progressive realisation of human rights and of progress towards a more sustainable world.

International development staff work with communities, usually in the developing world, on issues such as agriculture, education, sanitation and health. The goal is to create economic conditions and sustainable livelihoods for the people in the area.

Graduates who specifically study International Development and related programmes can often find employment with the official Irish aid programme, in Irish and international non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) such as Trocaire, Goal, Action Aid and Oxfam, and with agencies of the European Union and the United Nations as well as in journalism, education, local community development, and many other areas such as:

- Public Administration
- Journalism
- Media
- Voluntary sector
- Academic institutions
Other graduates are employed to work both in specialist (e.g. civil engineer) and non-specialist roles. Workers may also be involved in humanitarian/disaster relief projects in times of famine, drought and natural disasters. However, these people usually have specialist skills in areas like logistics, engineering and disease control. There is a big difference between paid and unpaid roles: graduates working overseas are often in unpaid roles where only costs are covered. Normally only experienced staff are in salaried employment.

Typical Roles

Some roles in this sector include:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Worker</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Fundraising Manager</td>
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<td>Community Development Worker</td>
<td>Social Care Worker</td>
<td>Aid/ Humanitarian Worker</td>
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<td>Community Education Officer</td>
<td>Sociologist/ Social Researcher</td>
<td>Lobbyist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality Officer</td>
<td>Probation and Welfare Officer</td>
<td>EU Policy Officer</td>
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Entry Routes

Community

Within the community and youth sector, many potential candidates choose to volunteer initially in an area of possible interest to them. It is usually very competitive to get paid employment in this sector and graduate training programmes are not at all common. The Irish website activelink.ie is useful for searching both volunteer and paid positions in the community, social and youth sector.

Social Work

It is essential to hold a qualification recognised by the National Social Work Qualifications Board (NSWQB) that will lead to the award of National Qualification in Social Work (NQSW). There are a number of routes.

Undergraduate Study

There are three options to studying Social Work at Undergraduate level:

1. There are only two undergraduate courses in Ireland that students can complete in order to directly qualify as a Social Worker:
   - Bachelor of Social Studies, Trinity College Dublin
   - Bachelor of Social Work, University College Cork (for mature students only)
2. It is possible to combine an academic Social Science degree with professional social work training at postgraduate level:

- **Bachelor of Sociology and Social Policy**, Trinity College Dublin
- **Bachelor of Social Science**, University College Dublin
- **Bachelor of Social Science**, Maynooth University
- **Bachelor of Social Science**, University College Cork
- **Bachelor of Arts in Social Science**, Waterford Institute of Technology
- **Bachelor of Arts in Social Science**, Dublin Business School

3. If students study an undergraduate degree in Sociology, Social Studies, Social Care or other related course, they could go on to study a postgraduate course in Social Policy and then apply to the Masters in Social Work to become a qualified Social Worker. Check [Qualifax](#) for courses.

**Postgraduate Study**

The Masters of Social Science (MSocSc) in Social Work is available in a number of colleges in Ireland and was developed for graduates who have completed a Social Science degree, or its equivalent, who are interested in pursuing a career in Social Work. Candidates must also satisfy certain standards of personal suitability for the work.

- **Masters in Social Work**, Trinity College Dublin
- **Master of Social Science (Social Work)**, University College Dublin
- **Master of Social Work**, University College Cork
- **Master of Arts in Social Work**, NUI Galway

These are two year, full-time graduate courses providing accredited professional training in social work. The course provides generic social work training that includes practice placements in a range of social work settings. The course meets the standards set by CORU (the Irish Social Work regulation board), which is recognised internationally.

Graduates from other disciplines are required to take a pre-professional training course with a substantial Social Policy focus before undertaking the Masters course in Social Work.

**International Development**

Graduates from all disciplines are recruited into positions associated with International Development. Specialist qualifications in Engineering, Medicine, and Law are necessary for certain specific jobs whereas courses of study in International Development can be attractive to more generalist roles. Students can search for courses in International Development on [mastersportal](#), [Qualifax](#), and [postgradireland](#).
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<td>Forige - National Youth Development Organisation</td>
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<td>GOAL</td>
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<td>IASW - Irish Association of Social Workers</td>
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<td>Irish Refugee Council</td>
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<td>National Youth Council of Ireland</td>
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<td>Kimmage Development Studies Centre.</td>
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