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Are you looking for a new challenge?

Find out more about a career as a Residential Childcare Worker



What is residential care?



Residential children's homes look after children and young people from many different backgrounds. They're a place where children and young people can live if they cannot be at home with their own families.

Residential homes aim to provide stability in a supportive, caring, safe and nurturing environment.

There are many types of residential homes and reasons why children and young people may need to spend time in a Residential children's home.

Being a Residential Child Care Worker

You'll provide a kind, empathetic, compassionate and fun environment for children and young people helping them to thrive. As part of a team, you will provide nurturing and supportive care to children and young people, on a day-to-day basis, helping them to access education and doing everything that is involved in day-to-day life.

You'll help them achieve what matters to them and give them a safe and stable environment. This includes celebrating their achievements and doing fun activities, but it also means being there during the difficult times and believing in them, even when they can't believe in themselves.

There will be tough days, but this is a rewarding and long-term role with plenty of career progression opportunities. The role varies depending on which home you work in and the needs of the children who live there.



Types of residential care

- Long term care – supports children who may be unable to live in their family home for a longer period.

- Reunification care – supports children who have been in care and provides a structured and supportive environment that helps prepare the child and family to return home.

- Emergency placement – offers short-term care for children needing immediate accommodation due to crisis or safeguarding concerns.

- Short break/respite – supports families of children with disabilities or complex medical needs by offering temporary residential care.

- Children with disabilities – tailored to children with physical or learning disabilities, with specialised staff and facilities.

- Step-down or semi-independent living – Helps older teens (16+) transition into adulthood by teaching life skills while providing structured support.

Residential care supports children and young people who may have:

- Physical disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Mental and emotional challenges
- Complex needs
- Neurodiversity
- Trauma



Key qualities required for a Residential Childcare Worker

Strong communication skills - able to engage effectively with children, colleagues and external professionals.

Positive and encouraging - help children and young people to build confidence and develop essential skills.

Enjoy working with children and young people and develop positive relationships.

Team player - works well within a team.

Empathetic and compassionate - able to provide emotional support and create a safe, caring environment for children.

Resilient - the ability to adapt to challenging and changing situations to meet the needs of the children and young people.

Able to promote dignity, morals and respect.

Organised and responsible - ensures daily routines are maintained while meeting the needs of the children and young people.

Flexible - available for different shifts/work patterns on a rota basis.

Qualifications and training

You do not always need qualifications to start as a residential childcare worker depending on the role, however you will need to work towards qualifications whilst working and gaining experience in the role.

You may be trained in trauma informed practise, positive behavioural support, proactive approaches and safeguarding.

You will also need to be registered with Social Care Wales and complete a Disclosure and Barring Service application. Your employer will support you with these.



Progression opportunities

Senior Childcare Worker/Senior Support Worker:
Residential Childcare Workers can progress to senior roles where they supervise other staff and provide more complex support.

Deputy/Assistant Manager:
With experience and qualifications, Residential Childcare Workers can advance to Deputy/Assistant Manager positions, assisting with the overall management of the home.

Registered Manager:
Experienced and qualified Registered Childcare Workers may become Registered Managers, responsible for the overall operation of the home.




Michaela
Residential Children's Home Manager
"I am proud to work in residential care, it makes me happy, and I love it."


Stephanie
Residential Children's Home Deputy Manager
"You get such amazing development, training and progression opportunities."


Tony
Residential Care Home Manager
"I have the same preconceptions as most people about the care industry, that it is mainly older females but that isn't the case. There is a lot of younger males now employed in the sector and a lot of younger staff in general."

Young person's story

I am a young person who has been in care for about eight years.

I was very quiet and shy when I moved into my first care home, it was unfamiliar and very overwhelming.

My carer showed me to my room and got me set up, but even though I had all my things, and my room was nice, I didn't feel at home.

I felt anxious and shy, preferring to stay in my room and keep myself to myself.

Over time, my carer tried to encourage me to eat meals with the other children and join in group activities, but I just wanted to be alone and in the safety of my room. She thought of lots of different ways to get me more involved in home life and to be more social with the group.

She was so patient and took the time to get to know me and my interests, giving me the time I needed to settle in and feel comfortable in my new home.

My carer knew I enjoyed music and had lots of playlists, she suggested one evening that we leave my room and go for a pre-dinner drive, put on my playlists and sing along to all my favourite tracks.

Young person's story

Week by week, she built my confidence and encouraged me to spend more and more time out of my room and share my love of music with the other children. Our drives began with listening to music but as they went on and I got to know her better, I used our drives to open up and tell her about my worries.

She worked hard to create trust between us and build my confidence.

Now, I spend loads of time out of my room, get on so well with the people I live with and life's much better. I feel confident, safe and secure.



Sian's story

Sian, a Residential Children's Home Manager from Wrexham, didn't follow a traditional path into the care sector and left school with one GCSE. However, one thing Sian always knew is that she felt passionate about making a difference in the lives of children in care.

Sian followed her passion and started as a Residential Children's Support Worker, working her way up over the last three decades to her current management position having gained her Level 5 qualification.

Sian said:
"I was never very good in school and didn't enjoy the structured classroom environment. But deep down, I knew I wanted to give back and make a difference to children and young people.

"I decided to apply for a role as a Residential Officer to gain hands-on experience and immediately knew the job was for me. I told myself that this was what I wanted to spend my life doing.

"I didn't think I wanted to be a manager because I thought I would lose the day-to-day contact with the children. However, I quickly realised that I could start making positive changes for the better and it allowed me more autonomy to employ the very best people to work with our children.

Sian's story

“I knew the importance of this, as I'd grown up around the children and experienced first-hand the values needed to be a good carer.”

“I’m proud of my progression and achievements, but view these as secondary to the achievements of the young people we deal with every day. I find the most rewarding part of the job is watching the children achieve milestones, even if it’s just the smallest of things and feeling happy, content and safe every day.”



Useful information

For more information and job opportunities in Residential Childcare please visit: www.wecare.wales local authority websites or private residential providers.

To view more case studies of individuals working in residential childcare scan the QR code.