

Home Care Assistant

Introduction

What do the following people have in common?

- An 80-year-old terminally ill man who needs physical help with getting in and out of his bath?
- A young woman who has multiple sclerosis and can't get to the shops on her own?
- A 19-year-old who is back home after a motorbike accident and needs help with all kinds of things from shaving to keeping hospital appointments?
- A family of four where the parents have drug-related problems and whose children are on the Child Protection Register for neglect?

They all rely on the services of a Home Care Assistant (also known as Home Carer or Home Help) who is employed in local authority social services departments in England and Wales (and by social work departments in Scotland). Home care assistants (HCAs) enable people to remain in their own homes with as much independence as possible. They give day to day personal care to the elderly people or those with physical and mental disabilities who are unable to look after themselves and who, without such help, might need residential, nursing or hospital care.

Work Environment

HCAs spend most of their time in people's homes. They are given a 'round' of clients and get to know individual clients very well. If a client is not talkative, it can be an isolating job. Occasionally two assistants will work together to transfer someone from, say, bed to bath using special equipment.

They may also have meetings and training courses with other colleagues in the office.

Because of health risks, special clothing and equipment are issued - gloves, tabards, torches, personal safety alarms and residual circuit devices (for use with electrical equipment).

Hours can be flexible, anything from 10 to 37 hours, including evenings and weekends, depending both on the needs of the service and the circumstances of the postholder. Generally the home care service is available from 7.00am to 10.30pm for 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Daily Activities

HCAs enable people to maximise their independence by visiting them in their homes and helping them with their personal care needs and domestic chores. Tasks include dressing, washing, taking people to the toilet and assistance

with eating and drinking, plus help with laundry, food preparation, shopping, cleaning and payment of bills.

There is also some transferring and handling of clients who need help in getting to and from bed/chair/toilet. Training is given in using specialist equipment such as hoists and in transferring and handling techniques.

Skills & Interests

- This job suits people who have some experience of providing care or working with people in a service environment such as catering, retail or health.
- You must be sensitive to the needs of all kinds of different people and be able to communicate with individuals of different levels of ability.
- You need to be able to work well in a team and on your own initiative.
- You must understand the importance of confidentiality and respect for a client's privacy.