

Playworker

Playworkers plan, organise and supervise play and activities for children and young people. These may be in or out of the school setting. Playworkers:



- aim to give young people choices about how to spend their leisure time and enable children to experiment through play
- are involved in imaginative play, sports, drama, music, outdoor activities, cooking or creative activities
- provide children with a safe place to play and supervise the children at all times to make sure that safety procedures are followed
- encourage fair and caring behaviour amongst the children and deal with any challenging behaviour.

Most playwork is needed after school, at weekends and during school holidays. There are some full-time jobs, but most are part time. Some are seasonal. Playwork settings include schools, community centres, adventure playgrounds, church halls, play buses and leisure centres.

Playworkers earn from around £10,000 a year for a playworker with no experience to a top salary of around £35,000 for a senior manager. These figures relate to full-time playworkers. However, the majority of playworkers work part time.

Playworkers should:

- be able to build good relationships with children, their parents and carers
- be good at listening to, and socialising with, children
- understand the needs of children and young people
- provide a safe and stimulating environment
- be able to work well as a member of a team
- have good communication skills.

Employers include local authorities, voluntary and charitable organisations, and private companies. Due to recent government initiatives, the playwork field is expanding and demand for playworkers is continuing to increase.

People do not need academic qualifications for this work, rather an interest in working with children. The most common way to qualify as a playworker is to gain nationally recognised vocational qualifications whilst working in a play setting. There are also a number of higher education courses relating to playwork.

The majority of playworkers are adults who have had some experience of working with children either on a paid or voluntary basis. However, there may be Apprenticeships in playwork available for 16 to 24 year olds.

Playworkers may progress to become play setting managers or supervisors. They may become consultants, trainers or development workers. It is also possible to become self-employed.