

Employability Skills and Career Development

Report: Support Worker (Driver) Role in Mental Health Care

Module name: Changemakers: Building your Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment

Module code: BMHP5015

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Word count: 2118

Introduction

This report focuses on a Support Worker (Driver) role advertised by Cygnet Health Care in Salford (Cygnet Health Care, 2026; see Appendix 1). This role involves supporting individuals with mental health needs within a rehabilitation setting, assisting with patient transport, and organising therapeutic activities. I have chosen this role because I am interested in working within mental health services and supporting vulnerable individuals to improve their quality of life. The role aligns with my personal values of compassion, empathy, and making a positive difference in people's lives.

This report will analyse the key employability skills required for this position, including communication, teamwork, and organisational skills. It will then evaluate my current skillset in relation to these requirements, identifying strengths and areas for development. Finally, the report will outline an action plan and timeline to support my career progression into this role, alongside strategies for building a professional identity and personal brand within the health and social care sector.

Analysis of Employability Skills

The Support Worker (Driver) role at Cygnet Health Care requires a range of employability skills, including communication, teamwork, resilience, emotional intelligence, and organisational ability (Cygnet Health Care, 2026). These are essential for delivering effective, person-centred care in a mental health rehabilitation setting. Employability refers to a combination of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that enable individuals to gain and sustain employment (Yorke, 2006).

Communication is a key requirement, with the role specifying "excellent communication skills both verbal and written" (Cygnet Health Care, 2026). This is vital for interacting with patients, families, and multidisciplinary teams, ensuring patient needs are understood and care is delivered safely. This aligns with the NHS 6Cs framework, where communication is central to effective care and teamwork (NHS England, 2015). It is also widely recognised as a core employability skill in modern workplaces (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023).

Teamwork is equally important, as the support worker must collaborate with clinical staff to deliver high-quality care. The requirement to work "in partnership with escorting clinical staff and colleagues" (Cygnet Health Care, 2026) reflects the importance of interdisciplinary

working, which improves patient safety and outcomes. Research highlights teamwork as a fundamental employability skill required across sectors (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023).

Resilience and emotional intelligence are also critical, particularly in mental health settings where service users may present complex needs. Support workers must remain calm and adaptable in emotionally demanding situations. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to manage their own emotions while responding appropriately to others, supporting the development of trust and therapeutic relationships (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023).

The role also requires strong organisational and time management skills, as employees must “plan and keep to a schedule” and manage workloads effectively (Cygnet Health Care, 2026). This highlights the need for prioritisation and independent working. In addition, digital skills are increasingly important, as healthcare workers are expected to use technology for communication and record-keeping, which are recognised as key employability competencies (Tushar and Sooraksa, 2023).

The development of these skills can be explained through Kolb’s Learning Cycle, which emphasises learning through experience, reflection, and application (Kolb, 1984). For example, communication skills can be developed through direct patient interaction, followed by reflection and improvement. This supports the idea that employability skills are strengthened through practical experience rather than solely theoretical learning (Yorke, 2006).

Overall, the Support Worker role requires a combination of interpersonal, practical, and cognitive skills. These are essential for delivering safe, effective, and compassionate care and align with both professional frameworks and employability research.

Evaluation of Personal Skills

In order to assess my suitability for the Support Worker (Driver) role at Cygnet Health Care, I conducted a self-evaluation using a SWOT analysis and reflective models. This enabled me to identify my strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development in relation to the employability skills required, as SWOT analysis is commonly used to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in professional development (Reshmi *et al.*, 2024).

One of my key strengths is communication. I am confident in interacting with others and can express myself clearly in both verbal and written forms. Through my studies and group work, I have developed active listening and the ability to respond appropriately. This is relevant to the support worker role, where communication is essential for building trust with patients and working with healthcare professionals. I also demonstrate empathy and emotional intelligence, which are important when supporting individuals with mental health needs. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, individuals require emotional support and a sense of belonging, which can be supported through compassionate communication (Maslow, 1943).

Another strength is my ability to work as part of a team. Through group assignments, I have learned to collaborate, share responsibilities, and support others to achieve common goals. This aligns with the role's requirement to work closely with colleagues. I am also organised and able to manage my time effectively, balancing academic deadlines and responsibilities. Developing these skills has been linked to improved self-efficacy and performance (Kordsalarzehi *et al.*, 2025).

However, a key weakness is my limited practical experience within healthcare settings. Although I have theoretical knowledge, I have not yet gained significant hands-on experience with patients. This reflects a common issue in healthcare education, where students lack practical experience despite academic understanding (Reshmi *et al.*, 2024). This may affect my confidence when dealing with complex mental health situations. Additionally, I lack experience in patient transport and professional driving, which is required for the role.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle supports my development by providing a structured way to reflect on experiences (Gibbs, 1988). For example, during a group presentation, I initially felt nervous but improved through preparation and delivery. This helped me recognise that confidence can be developed through practice. Similarly, Kolb's experiential learning theory highlights that skills are developed through experience and reflection (Kolb, 1984), reinforcing the importance of practical learning.

A skills audit indicates that while I have strong interpersonal and organisational skills, I need to develop practical competencies, including healthcare experience, resilience, and confidence in independent working. Resilience is particularly important in mental health settings, where challenging situations are common. Evaluating skills in real-life contexts is essential for development (Pilcher and Richards, 2025).

My experience working in a primary school has helped me develop transferable skills relevant to this role. Supporting children required clear communication, patience, and adaptability. Encouraging participation often required persistence and emotional control, which strengthened my resilience. For example, when a child refused to engage, I used positive reinforcement to support involvement. This demonstrates emotional intelligence and the ability to manage behaviour effectively. Reflecting on these experiences using Gibbs' model has improved my confidence in handling challenging situations.

Overall, I have a strong foundation of transferable skills, particularly in communication, teamwork, and empathy. However, I need to gain practical healthcare experience and further develop resilience and confidence. Addressing these gaps will improve my readiness for a career in health and social care.

Personal Brand & Professional Identity

Developing a strong personal brand and professional identity is essential for securing a role as a Support Worker. Personal branding refers to how an individual presents their skills, values, and personality to potential employers. In the context of health and social care, this should reflect professionalism, compassion, and a commitment to high-quality care.

My personal values strongly align with the expectations of the Support Worker role, particularly care, compassion, and dignity. These values are essential when supporting individuals with mental health needs, as they promote trust and positive relationships. My experience working in a primary school has helped me demonstrate patience, empathy, and the ability to support individuals who may find it difficult to engage in activities. These qualities form a key part of my professional identity and would enable me to provide person-centred care.

My unique selling point (USP) is my ability to remain calm and patient in challenging situations while encouraging engagement. For example, when working with children who were reluctant to participate in tasks, I used positive reinforcement and clear communication to support their involvement. This skill is transferable to a mental health setting, where service users may also struggle with motivation or participation. Additionally, my ability to adapt my communication style to different individuals strengthens my effectiveness in diverse care environments.

Although I do not currently have a professional online profile such as LinkedIn, I can promote my professional identity through a well-structured CV and cover letter. These documents will highlight my transferable skills, relevant experience, and commitment to working in health and social care. In addition, networking with professionals during placements or volunteering opportunities can help build connections and improve employment prospects. This reflects Social Capital Theory, which emphasises that valuable resources and opportunities are gained through relationships and social networks (van Bakel and Horak, 2024) .

Furthermore, Holland's Career Theory suggests that individuals are more likely to succeed in careers that align with their personality and values. Holland argues that career choice is an expression of an individual's personality, and greater alignment between personality and work environment leads to higher satisfaction and stability (Adlya and Zola, 2022) . My interest in helping others and working in supportive environments aligns with the social aspect of Holland's theory, making the Support Worker role a suitable career choice for me. This is further supported by career theory literature which emphasises the importance of matching personal interests with occupational environments (EBSCO, 2024).

Overall, my personal brand is built on empathy, patience, and strong communication skills, which position me as a suitable candidate for a future role in health and social care.

Action Plan & Timeline

In order to achieve my goal of becoming a Support Worker within a mental health setting, I have developed a structured action plan with short-term and long-term goals. This plan is based on the skills gap identified in my self-evaluation and is guided by the SMART framework, ensuring goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

In the short term (within 6–12 months), my priority is to gain practical experience in a health and social care environment. Within the next six months, I aim to apply for part-time or voluntary roles in settings such as care homes or community services. This will develop practical skills and confidence in real-life care situations. I also plan to complete training courses, including safeguarding, first aid, and mental health awareness, to strengthen my knowledge and demonstrate commitment to the sector.

In the medium term (1–3 years), I aim to secure a full-time Support Worker role to further develop my skills and gain professional experience. During this time, I will focus on improving resilience, communication, and independent working, particularly in challenging

situations. I will also develop my driving confidence, as this is a requirement of the role, and seek feedback from colleagues to support ongoing development.

In the long term (3–5 years), I aim to progress within the health and social care sector, potentially specialising in mental health or moving into a higher-level role. This may involve undertaking further education or professional training to increase my knowledge and responsibilities.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory supports this plan, suggesting individuals are more likely to succeed when they believe in their ability to achieve goals. Confidence develops through experience and gradual achievement, meaning smaller goals can strengthen self-belief over time (Bandura, 1977). This is reflected in my step-by-step approach to building skills and confidence.

Additionally, Social Capital Theory highlights the importance of building networks to access opportunities. Engaging in volunteering, training, and professional interactions can improve access to resources and career progression (Bourdieu, 1986). Developing these connections will support my employability within the sector.

Overall, this action plan provides a realistic pathway for developing the skills required for the Support Worker role. By following this approach, I will improve my employability and progress within the health and social care sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this report has explored my future career goal of becoming a Support Worker within a mental health setting, based on a role advertised by Cygnet Health Care. The analysis of employability skills highlighted the importance of communication, teamwork, resilience, and emotional intelligence in delivering effective, person-centred care. Through self-evaluation, I identified key strengths, including my communication skills, patience, and ability to work with individuals in challenging situations, supported by my experience in a primary school environment. However, I also recognised areas for development, particularly my lack of practical healthcare experience and the need to build confidence in professional care settings.

To address these gaps, I have developed a structured action plan that focuses on gaining relevant experience, completing training, and improving my professional skills over time. By

following this plan and continuing to reflect on my development, I aim to enhance my employability and successfully achieve my career goal. Overall, this report has demonstrated my commitment to personal and professional growth within the health and social care sector.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Job Advert - Support Worker (Driver)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `jobs.nhs.uk`. The page is for a job advertisement titled "Support Worker (Driver)" by Cygnet Health Care. A green button at the top right says "Apply for this job". Below the title, it states "The closing date is 28 May 2026". The "Job summary" section describes the role: recruiting for a Support Worker (40 hours per week) with previous healthcare experience to facilitate patient transport service needs. It mentions working 40 hours per week (12pm 8pm, 5 days per week) and that days off will be Thursday and Saturday OR Sunday. It also states that applicants must hold a full UK driving licence and have held it for over 21 years old or over and to have held a full UK driving licence for over 24 months. The job is at Cygnet Lodge Salford, a high support inpatient rehabilitation (level 2) service for women. The "Main duties of the job" section states that at Cygnet, they support their people to grow their careers, gain new skills and keep stepping up. The "About us" section is partially visible at the bottom. On the right side, there is a section for "For questions about the job, contact:" with the Recruiter's name, Katie Dixon, email VP81C107A1.1286@vacancyposter.com, and phone number 01217288111. Below this, there are sections for "Date posted" (28 April 2026), "Pay scheme" (Other), "Salary" (£13.15 to £13.70 an hour), and "Contract" (Permanent).

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Cygnet Health Care

Support Worker (Driver)

The closing date is 28 May 2026

Job summary

We are currently recruiting for a Support Worker (40 hours per week) with previous healthcare experience to facilitate patient transport service needs of the hospital as and when required, plus being responsible for weekend and evening activities for our patients. You will be working 40 hours per week: 12pm 8pm, 5 days per week. Your days off will be Thursday and Saturday OR Sunday. Please note, you must hold a full UK driving licence. Due to policies you need to be 21 years old or over and to have held a full UK driving licence for over 24 months. Cygnet Lodge Salford is a high support inpatient rehabilitation (level 2) service for women. The service supports 24 individuals with a primary diagnosis of mental illness, but they may also have a complex secondary diagnosis, including a personality disorder. You will also be responsible for running a programme of evening and weekend activities 5 days a week, and setting up the remaining 2 days activities.

Main duties of the job

At Cygnet, we support our people to grow their careers, gain new skills and keep stepping up. Apply now to enjoy excellent career prospects while reaping the rewards of making a difference to others every day.

About us

For questions about the job, contact:

Recruiter
Katie Dixon
VP81C107A1.1286@vacancyposter.com
01217288111

Date posted
28 April 2026

Pay scheme
Other

Salary
£13.15 to £13.70 an hour

Contract
Permanent

Apply for this job