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Module name: Changemakers: Building your Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment -
Component 2: Assignment (Report)

Module code: BMHP5015

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Introduction

The profession of Social Work is an essential part of the health and social care sector in the UK. The focus of Social Work is on protecting those who are vulnerable and promoting health and wellbeing. For this report, I have chosen to examine Social Worker (Adults' Services), which typically falls under the public sector, and therefore works closely with health professionals, families and community services to assess individuals' needs and manage their risk to support them to live safely and independently. I have found a recent advertised vacancy for a local authority within the UK, which outlines the responsibilities of the post, such as safeguarding, developing care plans and multi-agency working.

I have an interest in pursuing this career because I am of the opinion that the profession of Social Work matches my personal beliefs regarding social justice, equality and supporting those who are vulnerable. It is also an essential part of my long-term career aim to work with individuals and families to enhance the outcome for both these groups, again, largely through the context of safeguarding.

This report will begin with an analysis of employability skills for the Social Worker position, followed by an evaluation of my current skills against these same criteria. At the end of the report I will outline an action plan for developing further skills required for this career, including the establishment of both a personal brand and professional network.

Analyse the Personal Employability Skills Required

Social Work professionals within Local Authorities in the UK must possess a variety of employability skills, professionalism, and relevant qualifications. The Person Specification further identifies that Social Workers require resilience; emotional intelligence; and a good understanding of safeguarding legislation and policy.

The Skills for Care Foundation Core Skills Framework supports this by identifying Communication as one of the Core Skills necessary to deliver safe and person-centred support and care (Skills for Care, 2022). An example of effective communication by a Social Worker would be during a Care Assessment, where the Social Worker will be required to listen attentively, ask relevant questions and explain information that may be confusing so that the service user, family and other professionals can understand the information given.

In Social Work, Emotional Intelligence and Resilience are also important skills. Compassion and Emotional Awareness are extremely important qualities to have when helping vulnerable people, as emphasised through the NHS values as well as the six C's of caring for others (Care, Compassion, Competence, Communication, Courage and Commitment (NHS England, 2013). An example of Compassionate Emotional Intelligence is when a social

worker is faced with a potentially difficult situation for the individual, the Social Worker must remain calm and able to identify which emotion(s) need to be managed in order to de-escalate the challenging situation towards creating a positive outcome.

Another important employability skill for Social Workers is Teamwork and Multi-Agency Working. Social Workers usually work as part of a Team, collaborating and working with professionals and agencies from Health and Education sectors, as well as the Voluntary Sector. The STAR model (Situation, Task, Action, Result) can demonstrate how teamwork skills are put into action. For example, if a Social Worker were working on a Safeguarding case (situation), they may need to share information with other agencies (task), attend and actively participate in a strategy meeting (action), and contribute to a Joint Care Plan (result). Working as a Team reduces risk and increases the chances of a successful outcome for the Service User.

Digital Literacy is becoming ever-increasingly relevant and right across the field of Social Work. Local authorities utilise digital case management systems to document how they have assessed clients, developed care plans and recorded child safeguarding concerns. The Employability Skills Framework places Digital Competence at the forefront of all professional roles within very modern times (The Cambridge , 2022).

The development of the Employment Skills Framework has an even closer connection to how professionals develop their employability skills via experiential learning. Kolb's Learning Cycle suggests that professionals develop skills due in part to the ability to learn through Concrete Experience, Reflection, Conceptual Understanding and Active Experimentation (Misra and Mishra, 2011). Within Social Work, the skills of decision-making and risk assessment are acquired through a combination of time spent on practice placements, supervision and, above all else, reflective learning.

Evaluate Your Own Skills

To determine my qualification for the position of Social Worker I need to consider my current skills compared with what will be required for the position. To help me do this I will perform a SWOT analysis of my skills to identify my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and areas where I can improve. The SWOT analysis provide a way to analyse my skills while taking into account both my current abilities and my potential for future growth.

Communication is one of my biggest strengths. Through my education in Health and Social Care and through my experience of working with people, I have developed the ability to communicate concisely and respectfully. An example of this is when I worked in groups at university, I contributed to discussions, listened to others' ideas, and helped make decisions

collaboratively. This demonstrates the type of communication capability required by Social Workers, particularly when dealing with clients and other professionals who may have differing views or backgrounds.

My ability to empathize and I'm committed to helping vulnerable people is another of my strengths. The values of Social Work and the NHS 6Cs include compassion and care, and my commitment to empathy aligns directly with these values (Moudatsou et al., 2020). This commitment was evidenced during my volunteering in a care environment, when I assisted people with their daily activities, and through this experience, I came to realize that the use of person-centred care contributes to improving the well-being of an individual. As a result, I have a greater understanding of the extent to which respect, dignity, and professional boundaries are important to the practice of Social Work.

There are some areas of my skillset that I need to develop. A major area that I need to improve is to have the experience of working in statutory Social Work settings, specifically with Local Authority Safeguarding teams.

I have used Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to reflect on my experiences regarding a challenging academic situation that involved a group presentation. At first, I was anxious about the many different perspectives and opinions that members of my group had. However, by calming myself and concentrating on what we had in common, I was able to facilitate agreement amongst members of my group. Through my reflection, I have realised how important it is for Social Workers to have emotional regulation and teamwork skills in order to be a successful practitioner.

Being motivated is another key criteria when examining my capacity to be a successful Social Worker. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, I understand how my professional development aligns with my Basic Needs and Safety Needs. My education and the support systems I have in place fulfil my Basic Needs and Safety Needs; therefore enabling me to focus on my higher level needs including Esteem and Self-Actualisation (Cherry, 2024).

Building a Personal Brand and Professional Identity

To create my personal brand, I will create and maintain a professional CV that clearly documents my educational background, relevant work experience, and transferable skills that will provide strong examples of working within the fields of communication, teamwork, and reflective practice, along with my academic training and placement experiences. I will complete my profile with a professional picture of myself, a brief personal statement about

my interest in the field, and documentation of my continuing professional development (CPD).

I possess a level of strong academic understanding within the area of Safeguarding, along with a strong personal value of wanting to work with vulnerable adults, which is my unique selling point (USP). The roadmap of employability outlined in the CareerEDGE Model identifies reflection, experience and emotional intelligence as critical to employability; all three areas are currently in development for me (Pool, 2016).

In addition to networking through providing a personal brand, I plan to connect professionally to build my brand through accessing professional networks which have already established to inform me about updates from Social Work England, Recruitment Events held by local authorities and LinkedIn groups of professionals more closely related to the profession. Through creating and maintaining relationships within the profession, we can more easily access opportunities, information and progress in our careers (Luoma-aho, 2018).

According to Holland's theory of career choices, social work is associated with social and investigative types. These types include a high value of assisting others and contributing to the problem-solving process (Mohn, 2024).

Action Plan and Timeline

To reach my goal of becoming a social worker in a UK local authority, I need to develop an action plan with a clear timeline that includes how I am going to close the gap between my current skills and what is required for this role. My action plan will also include building up my experience and qualifications so I am able to fulfil the requirements of being a social worker. I will be using a SMART goals approach to define each of my goals as being Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time Bound.

Short-term goals (0-2 years)

My primary focus, for the near future, is to obtain my current Health and Social Care qualification, which will provide me with increased theoretical background knowledge in regards to safeguarding legislation and ethical practice. Additionally, while completing these studies, I will also attempt to gain paid and/or voluntary experience in a care/support role (such as Support Worker or Care Assistant) in order to gain practical skills (such as communication, record keeping, and working with vulnerable adults) related to this area of work.

Also, I will continue to seek CPD (Continuing Professional Development) training, which may be available online, through Local Authorities, or Voluntary Organisations, in order to

develop my understanding of Safeguarding; Mental Health Awareness and Equality and Diversity.

Medium-term goals (2-4 years)

The goal for me in the next 2 years is to secure an opportunity to go to University and register on a Social Work course as per the accreditation standards set by Social Work England. At this time I will also be completing my required practicum through both statutory and non-statutory settings.

In addition to developing these skills I will be focusing on building my professional network. Building up contacts with lecturers and placement supervisors and developing relationships with students on my course will be important to me. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory states that individuals who have confidence in their ability will continue to build on that confidence over time, mainly through positive reinforcement and successful outcomes (Garrido, 2025).

Long-term goals (4-5 years)

As part of my long-term objective, I am aiming for an initial social services position with my local authority thus qualifying as a Social Worker. My ultimate aim is to complete my registration process with Social Work England and develop a professional network through participating in training and developmental supervision. For now, my focus is to develop advanced knowledge specific to the areas of safeguarding and care planning.

Summary Timeline (5 Years)

Timeframe Action

0–2 years Complete H&SC qualification, gain care experience, attend CPD

2–4 years Begin Social Work degree, complete placements, network

4–5 years Qualify, register with SWE, apply for Social Worker role

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to look at my career goal of being a Social Worker for a Local Authority in the UK and to analyse the Employment Skills needed for this type of job.

When looking at the job specifications of Social Work, it is apparent that Social Work requires excellent Communication Skills, Emotional Resilience, the ability to work in a Team, Digital Skills and a strong commitment to Ethical and Person-Centred Practices.

From my own Self-Evaluation of Skills, I know that I have good Academic Knowledge, Empathy and Motivation but there are areas where I need to improve, mainly by obtaining Practical Experience within a Statutory Social Work Setting. However, I consider these gaps to be Opportunities to grow rather than Limiting Factors. Therefore, I have outlined in my Action Plan and Timeline a structured and realistic pathway of obtaining the Skills, Qualifications and Professional Confidence that I require to be a successful Social Worker.

By completing this assignment, I have defined my career identity, resulting in greater loyalty to the profession of Social Work. Additionally, the assignment confirmed how important it is to reflect on one's work, continue to develop as a professional, and network within the health and social care field.

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