

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Dave Anderson, Social Worker

"It's a good career where you
can make a difference"



Dave has worked as a social worker for almost 40 years. Read more about his role as a Children Services Manager at Barnardo's.

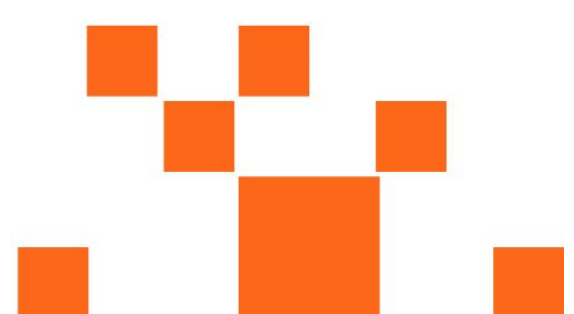
**What type of service
do you work in?**


Barnardo's Family Support Team provides a range of community based support to children and young people with significant learning disabilities and their families.

**Have you always
worked in social
services?**

I graduated from Moray House College in 1977 with a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. I started work with Tayside Regional Council as a social worker then moved to Perth and Kinross Council.

I joined Barnardo's in 1985 as the first family worker in the service. The preceding eight years with the then Tayside Regional Council were really an invaluable apprenticeship giving me both the practice experience and confidence to take on such a new and exciting challenge – helping set up a service from scratch.





Indeed for any social worker to gain local authority experience, in my view, is important.

The perceptions of social work 30 years ago were quite different to what they are now. There was a stigma attached to the job title as 'social worker' and when I got the job as Family Project Worker I was told "you're still a social worker – you're just not using the title".

Can you tell us more about your job?

Working in Barnardo's is unlike working in local authority and child protection social work; it's a voluntary arrangement with families coming and going. We can support up to 120 families and, at the moment, we have another 20 on the waiting list.

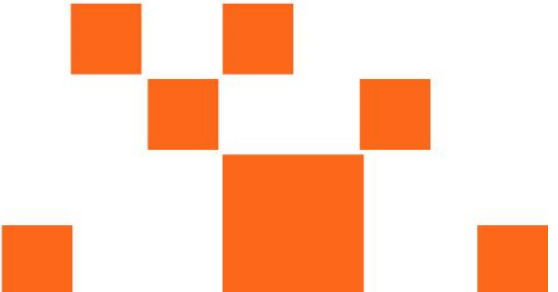
It's important to make sure that the families are happy with the service so having contact with the families and children is vital.


It's my job to promote the service. I'm active in the social work community and am a representative on local forums including interagency with Dundee City Council and the NHS.

I also promote the needs of young people with learning disabilities.

I have a core team of eight who I support and manage and we also have child care staff, social work practitioners and over 20 support staff. Quite a bit of my time is taken up with staff support and supervision and recruitment and retention. I promote the service to colleges and universities and take students on placement.

I also have a large budget to manage which includes funding for a specialist project and development growth.





As new trends and developments start to emerge eg self-directed support, I keep people aware and up to date with progress.

Who else is in your team?

Three family workers, one play scheme and activities coordinator and a volunteers coordinator. Our Growing Up team has one development worker, a support worker and a gardener/instructor. We also have our project administrator and secretarial assistant, 60 volunteers and 20+ support staff.

What part of your job motivates you and why?

Making a difference to people's lives.

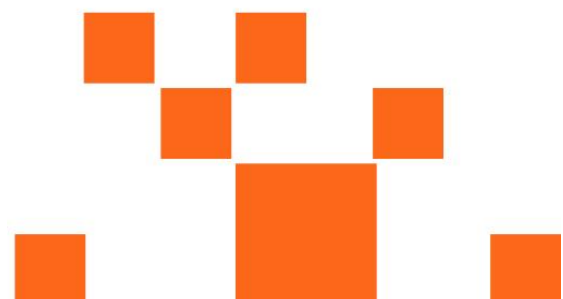
I get a lot of satisfaction from my job because I know that the types of activities we run make a difference to (sometimes vulnerable) young people and their families.

It's different working in the voluntary sector. It's their choice to come to and use our service.

What are the challenges, good and not so good that you face in your job?

We have a capacity issue. We can't take on any more families at the moment and there are 20 families on our waiting list. I have to figure out how we are going to address this with no additional resources. It's an ongoing issue – an increased demand for the service with a decreasing budget.

Staff turnover is also an issue, as is recruitment. It's difficult to find the right people. We're lucky to have over 60 volunteers but they're not always active and not always available.





In what way is your career in social services rewarding?

I've had lots of students doing their placements over lots of years and it's good when students come back, either to volunteer or work with us as competent staff members.

It's also good to see our volunteers get on well in life including gaining employment.

Can you explain the skills and qualities you think are needed to do the role you're doing?

You'll need:

- a passion for the job
- an interest in children
- to be proactive for disabled children
- a sense of humour
- resilience
- to know that you're not going to be everyone's best friend
- to have a clear vision for the service
- to want to help children and families.

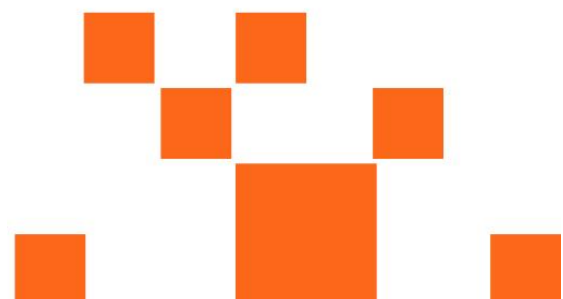
Has your job opened up new learning and development for you?

It's got harder in recent years with funding constraints and a decreasing training budget. But I've had lots of opportunities for further development – that's one of the reasons I've stayed in the sector – to develop myself.

How do you see your career progressing?

I'm semi-retired and now work three days a week.

I've worked in social work for nearly 40 years and I think that's long enough! I'm looking forward to retiring.





What would you say to someone thinking about a career in social services?

It's a good career where you can make a difference.

It can be difficult dealing with people and their emotions and you need resilience.

You're not going to change the world, it can be exhausting and you may lose a sense of what's normal but the small differences that you make help make a difference to people's lives.

It's a hard, stressful job but it's a rewarding career and it's reasonably well paid.

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You can hear from people already working in social care, early years or social work as they talk about why they love their job and what a difference they make to someone's life. And find out about the many different types of jobs and areas you can work in.

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