

Your Degree in Community Development...What Next?

Community Development is a process that seeks to build strong, sustainable communities by bringing people and groups together for the good of the wider community and society. Based on principles of equality, fairness and respect it sets out to influence power structures and remove barriers that prevent people from taking part in decisions that affect their lives.

Community work is concerned with the development and empowerment of communities through facilitating the active participation of people in addressing issues that affect them collectively. It can be done in a variety of contexts: in neighbourhoods, with specific groups (e.g. women, Travellers), with partnership groups, local authorities and state agencies.

Community workers usually work in teams and liaise closely with the Gardaí, social workers, teachers, probation officers and other agencies. They represent the voices and needs of target groups and disadvantaged communities to policy makers at local and national level.

A good deal of the work is project based, which means that community development workers usually have a specific geographical community or social group on which to focus.

Tasks often involve:

- identifying community skills, assets, issues and needs;
- ensuring that local people have their say;
- developing new resources in dialogue with the community and evaluating existing programmes;
- building links with other groups and agencies;
- helping to raise public awareness on issues relevant to the community;
- preparing reports and policies;
- raising and managing funds;
- developing and implementing strategies;
- liaising with interested groups and individuals to set up new services;
- mediating in matters of conflict;
- recruiting and training paid and voluntary staff;
- planning, attending and coordinating meetings and events;
- overseeing the management of a limited budget;
- encouraging participation in activities;
- challenging inappropriate behaviour;
- general administrative duties.
- making funding applications

What skills have I gained from my Community Development Degree?

You will need to show:

- advocacy and networking skills;
- excellent communication, interpersonal and team-building skills;
- good listening skills;
- research and report-writing skills and the ability to interpret or present data;
- knowledge and understanding of community and social issues;
- a non-judgemental and positive attitude;
- sincerity and patience
- commitment and enthusiasm
- creative thinking and problem-solving;
- political, social and negotiating skills;
- an understanding of how public sector bodies work;
- capable of working on own initiative and as part of a team
- compassion and the ability to empathise with people's life experiences;
- fundraising - at management level there is an increasing need to identify and pursue sources of funding.

Work Experience

Pre-entry paid or voluntary work experience is crucial. People often become community development workers after working in teaching, youth work, the health sector or other roles within the community. Development work overseas may also be relevant.

It's important to have a proven interest in community and social issues and at least a year's involvement in areas such as:

- community work;
- women's projects;
- pressure groups;
- youth work.

Try to get involved in voluntary work as a student, in local community projects, youth groups, tenants' associations or women's groups. Contact your local volunteer centre to get community project experience

Typical employers

Community work organisations and agencies:

- Community development projects
- Local urban and rural development groups
- Organisations concerned with particular groups (women, Travellers, new communities) or issues (unemployment, migrant rights, drugs, poverty).
- Healthcare, Residential Care, Social Care sector

Organisations within the voluntary sector are varied and include:

- community associations
- women's groups
- environmental groups
- children's charities
- homeless projects
- shelters
- churches and other faith groups
- health and mental health organisations
- minority groups, refugee's, travellers, LGBT

Community work approaches are increasingly used in related areas (local economic development, health promotion, social care, participatory arts) and positions of leadership and management are increasingly open to graduates with relevant experience.

Many organisations employing community development workers often offer programmes of in-house training, which usually focus on issues such as child protection and equal opportunities.

Due to the broad nature of community work, workers can develop their careers by moving into other fields such as:

- education
- environment
- social care work
- youth work
- health sector

Opportunities also exist for overseas development work;

<http://www.dochas.ie/>

<http://www.developmenteducation.ie/>

<http://comhlamh.org/>

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Possible further study course options for graduates of the BA Community Development (Level 7)

It is common for community development workers to pursue their own continuing professional development by undertaking a Master's degree or other postgraduate qualification. Relevant subjects may include:

- voluntary sector studies
- youth and community
- social studies
- social policy
- housing practice;
- business and community studies;
- legal studies
- public health/community health
- management
- counselling and psychotherapy

There are many wide and varied options which one can pursue.

Some Course Options in Ireland

Most of these courses will bring graduates to a level 8 (honours level) degree opening up opportunities to progress to Masters level and possibly gain a professional qualification.

- Note significant relevant experience in a field in addition to the BA (level 7) can sometimes open up eligibility to gain a place on a relevant Master's degree programme.
- ***Guideline:** Always contact the course co-ordinator of a postgraduate course to check eligibility!

Higher Diploma in Coaching and Coaching Psychology UCC (one night weekly and some weekends workshops) level 8 Honours

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/study/ace/courses/pgdip/>

Higher Diploma in Relationship Mentoring level 8 Honours

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/study/ace/courses/pgdip/>

Higher Diploma in Sociology 1 year FT/ 2 years PT Level 8 honours

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/cka22/>

Higher Diploma in Social Personal Education (WIT Part time) level 8 Honours

MA in Social and Personal Education (WIT Part time) Level 9

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Check the possibility of making a direct application to enter year 2 or 3 of this

Postgraduate Certificate in Cognitive and Behavioural Psychotherapy leads to eligibility to apply for **Higher Diploma in Cognitive and Behavioural Psychotherapy** (Level 9) and possibly an **MA in Cognitive and Behavioural Psychotherapy**

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/ckw21/>

Relevant Masters Degrees in Cork include

MA in Youth Work with Community Arts and Social Studies (UCC)

MA in Art Therapy Applied Psychology (CIT Crawford)

MSc in Personal and Management Coaching (UCC)

MA in Guidance & Counselling (Applied Psychology) (UCC)

MA in Coaching Practice (UCC)

****Important to Note - it is worth contacting a Course Coordinator directly, in order to discuss whether you are eligible for their programme or as to whether they might consider you for advanced entry into a relevant Level 8 honours degree programme. Such as Youth and Community, Social Care etc.***

Some Course Options in the UK (Distance Learning)

De Montfort University, Leicester, offers more flexible entry requirements to their PG Certs, PG Diplomas and Masters. Students are recommended to look at all courses on offer through the University and contact them prior to making an application.

Some examples in De Montfort University include;

- **Health and Community Studies**
- **Youth Work, Health and Community Development**
- **Youth Work and Community Development with Professional Qualification**

Useful Links & Sources of Information

- ****Most useful resource for Non Profit Sector Community & Social jobs in Ireland.***
www.activelink.ie - online network for non-profit organisations. Provides information on jobs, tenders, volunteering, events, fundraising, training, publications and funding in the non-profit sector.
Tip: *Can sign up for weekly job vacancies e-mail – this is a great idea as ensures that you check it each week*
- www.healthcarejobs.ie
- www.publicjobs.ie
- Use the www.mycit/careers website and check out the ‘find a job’ section.

Further Resources

- Gradireland publications – available at the Careers Service or download a copy from www.gradireland.com

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- For Career opportunities in the UK see www.targetjobs.co.uk
- Also go to Job Sectors on www.prospects.ac.uk

- **Tip:** If you are unsure about what direction to take after your degree, the gradireland Careers Report is a useful tool for matching your personal information and preferences to potential careers. Log on and register at www.gradireland.com to use the report.
- **Tip:** If you want to find out more information about what is involved in any of the job titles listed in this document check out the A-Z Occupation list on www.careersportal.ie