FREE GUIDE · UK CAREERS

Safeguarding Career Roadmap

Where to start, how to progress and which routes need a regulated qualification.

How to use this roadmap: find the stage that matches your experience today, then check what the next step needs. You do not have to start in a specialist officer role. Many people begin in a support role and build up.

MAIN CAREER PATH

1 GET STARTED

Support roles

Pastoral support officer · Residential support worker £22k–£30k · Family support worker · Care worker · Safeguarding Support Officer apprenticeship (L3, England)

What employers may look for:

- Transferable experience: childcare, education, youth work, health and social care, volunteering, customer support or record keeping
- Communication, reliability and professional judgement
- References and role checks. A degree is often not essential

↓ Build experience with children or adults at risk, plus safeguarding training

2 SPECIALISE

Safeguarding officer and coordinator roles

Safeguarding officer · Safeguarding coordinator · Child protection officer £27k–£50k · Safeguarding support officer

What employers may look for:

- Experience with children, vulnerable adults or related services
- Recognising concerns, accurate confidential records and supporting referrals
- Safeguarding knowledge and CPD that fits the sector

↓ Take on organisational responsibility and lead others

3 LEAD AND MANAGE

Lead and management roles

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in a school or college · Safeguarding lead · Safeguarding manager pay varies by employer

What employers may look for:

- Substantial practical experience and leadership skills
- Appropriate organisational responsibility and role-specific training
- Qualifications suited to the employer's sector

SEPARATE LANE: REGULATED PROFESSIONS

Social worker

£32k–£48k

Needs an approved social work qualification and professional registration (Social Work England in England). The title *social worker* is protected.

Specialist safeguarding nurse

Band 6 example: £39,959–£48,117

Needs a healthcare qualification, professional registration and relevant clinical experience.

A short course or CPD certificate cannot replace an approved qualification or professional registration.

THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER

- Communication and empathy
- Accurate, factual record keeping
- Professional boundaries
- Risk awareness and following procedures
- Teamwork with other agencies
- Keeping knowledge up to date with CPD
- The DBS check level depends on the role
- Rules differ in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Build your child safeguarding knowledge
Safeguarding Children Level 3: CPD accredited online course from Academy for Health & Fitness
View the course →

Please note: salaries are indicative and change over time. Actual pay depends on employer, location, experience and responsibilities. Always check the person specification and the current vacancy before applying. Completing a course does not guarantee employment. **Sources:** National Careers Service (child protection officer, residential support worker, social worker profiles); NHS Employers pay scales 2026/27 (England); Social Work England; Skills England. Full guide: uk.hfonline.org/safeguarding-jobs-uk · Updated November 2026