

How can a renal social worker help me?



Working together for better patient information

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Figure reprinted with permission from Seekles, M.L. (2021). Investigating UK renal psychosocial service provision. (PhD Thesis, University of Salford & Kidney Care UK, Salford, UK). Available via: <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/59590>

What does a social worker do?

Renal social workers are qualified social workers who work in collaboration with other members of the kidney multi-disciplinary team in children's or adult hospitals and dialysis units. They also have direct links with local authority social work teams and specialist charities.

Renal social workers are skilled in offering practical support and advice to children, young people, adults and carers living with kidney disease.

This may involve:

- Talking through the practical or social implications of treatment decisions, maximising quality of life and wellbeing.
- Listening, informing, assessing and planning in a range of personal, emotional and practical, e.g financial matters.
- Aiming to prevent problems or provide support in a crisis.

How can a renal social worker help me?

Some of the ways that renal social workers can help you or your family include:

- Emotional support including adjusting to a diagnosis and support with living with a long-term condition like kidney disease.
- Attending multi-agency meetings to agree practical support plans for patients and their families, including help at home.
- Completing home visits to discuss treatment options and talk through what will work best for you as a family.
- Support with benefit applications, appeals and change of circumstances.
- Charitable grant applications. These can be for financial assistance, white goods, furniture, household items, sheds for storage of dialysis equipment, holidays, specialist toys & equipment etc.

- Supporting families with housing issues including re-housing requests, adaptations to enable better home care, medical priority, council tax benefits etc
- Support to access food banks.
- Help with legal issues including power of attorney, immigration issues, safeguarding and will writing.
- Support with accessing local authority schemes such as Blue Badges, Disabled Facilities Grants etc.
- Referring, signposting and liaising with other agencies, such as schools (including contributions to education health care plans), occupational therapists, specialist charities (i.e. Women's Aid, Shelter), social care, play specialists, psychology services, patient/parents' employers, utility companies, solicitors (especially immigration and family law), and other health professionals.
- Support with work issues such as advice on how to negotiate with employers to attend medical appointments.
- Applying for wishes for children (i.e. Rays of Sunshine and Make a Wish)
- Requesting support from Social Care when necessary to ensure that children's complex needs are met and that they are kept safe from harm.



How can I see a renal social worker?

There are renal social workers in many, but not all of the UK's 84 kidney units. They are employed by local councils or the NHS and services provided can vary from unit to unit. Please talk to your kidney team if you would like to be referred to a renal social worker or contact the **British Association of Social Workers** as below.

Are discussions with renal social workers confidential?

Yes. Any conversations that you have with social workers are kept confidential and they will ask your permission before recording anything in your medical notes. Your social worker will not pass on any information that you have told them without your permission unless they feel that you or someone else is at risk of harm, in which case they have a duty to report it.



Where can I find out more information?

- Kidney Care UK: Patient information - www.kidneycareuk.org
- Kidney Care UK: Advice and support - www.kidneycareuk.org/get-support/advice-support
- British Association of Renal Social Workers - www.basw-renal.co.uk
- British Association of Social Workers - www.basw.co.uk
- Kidney Care UK: Financial support - www.kidneycareuk.org/get-support/financial-support




Contact us



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