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# Case study

At the age of 24, Stephanie is very focused on a career in social care. She began her career as an apprentice at Certitude and believes that the opportunities to progress in this sector are unlimited. Through 650 staff, the organisation supports over 1,700 people with learning disabilities or mental health needs in London boroughs and neighbouring counties.

**Stephanie Taylor**  
Support Worker  
Certitude

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[www.skillsforcare.co.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.co.uk)

*I care...*

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## Background

After leaving school, Stephanie worked in childcare for two years before moving on to work for a behavioural consultancy that supported children and young people who had various issues that impacted on their education. She helped to run workshops and focus groups and was involved in mentoring. Stephanie also attained A-levels in Psychology, Social Policy, Humanities and Creative Writing at college.





## Career progression

Stephanie had a personal interest in pursuing a career in mental health, having already supported family and friends with mental health issues. Whilst exploring employment opportunities, she came across an Apprenticeship in health and social care with Certitude. It offered her the chance to gain experience in social care, and more specifically, mental health.

“I was astounded to learn of such a wide variety of social care roles. Because I have a natural empathy towards supporting people with mental health issues, I grabbed the Apprenticeship opportunity and started to work four days a week for Certitude, plus one day a week at a college in Brixton.”

## A role in social care

Stephanie has worked as a Support Worker since 2010.

For Stephanie, part of the excitement of the Support Worker role is the variety it offers. She can often be found supporting up to five residents on a one-to-one basis; with each having unique needs. She works in a team of five permanent employees and some temporary agency staff that support customers with practical issues like housing, sorting out finances, daily living, volunteering or simply lending a friendly ear for a chat. Liaison with outside services like GPs, day centres and gyms, care coordinators and psychiatrists is a key part of Stephanie's role.

“Knowing that at the end of each day I've made a difference to someone's life is so satisfying. Some of our customers might not have family or friends or even leave their homes, so making them smile through simple pleasantries or conversation can just make a huge difference to how they feel.”

Stephanie says that social care isn't without its issues, like every sector, but enjoys rising to each and every challenge. Her ultimate aim is to ensure that she personally offers the most appropriate support aligned to an individual's requirements.



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## Ongoing support

Stephanie has felt overwhelmed with the level of support received from both internal and external colleagues, including her manager, peers and trainers, external social workers, hospital staff and other agencies with whom best practice and ideas are often shared.

“As an employer, Certitude is incredibly supportive, particularly with training and personal development, that can be specific to learning difficulties or mental health. I have benefited enormously over the last two years and grown in both ability and confidence.”

Stephanie has taken part in a number of training courses including health and safety, manual handling and challenging behaviour. She has attained a level 2 qualification in Health and Social Care and is working towards a level 3 qualification. In 2013, she hopes to move to a supervisory role. Her future ambition is to be a social worker and complete a social work degree via Open University, whilst continuing to work.

“I started on an Apprenticeship and am very grateful for that opportunity. It’s a fantastic pathway into social care. I would highly recommend working in this sector as you can really make a big difference to people’s lives. There are constant changes and you’re always learning, which keeps me active and motivated. I have personal ambitions to manage my own mental healthcare organisation one day so the more experience I gain, the better insight I will have into what our customers need.”

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## Skills for Care

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