



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Support Worker?

What does the Autism Association look for in a Support Worker?

We are particularly looking for people with the following qualities, values and attributes:

- Respect
- Kindness, care, patience
- Demonstrated initiative and ability to problem solve
- Confident and effective communicator
- Fun loving and flexible

Previous experience with people with disabilities or autism is desirable, but not essential.

Which services employ Support Workers?

- Community Living - Shared Living (Residential Support Worker)
- Individual Living and Individual Options (Community Support Worker)
- Short Breaks (Short Breaks Support Worker)
- Employment Services (Job Coach)

While there are some commonalities in relation to the support worker role, your hours of duty and designated tasks will be different in each service. The services, however, are always provided in a manner that acknowledges the uniqueness of each person with Autism, with the overall aim of developing skills that maximise independence and community participation. Support workers are allocated based on the needs of the individual clients and the personal attributes of the support worker.

Community Living – Individual Living

The Individual Living program supports adults with Autism who live independently in their own home. Generally each person is able to be on their own for some of the time, including overnight. Support for people in Individual Living is usually provided on a 1:1 basis. The hours of work vary, but support is usually provided between the hours of 6am and 10pm, for periods of between 3 and 10 hours.

The support worker is expected to assist the person with Autism according to their individual needs. This would include help in the following areas:

- Assistance with personal care depending on the needs of the individual
- Planning and cooking nutritional meals
- Grocery Shopping
- General household duties, including cleaning, washing and ironing
- Supporting clients in household budgeting
- Providing the clients with enjoyable recreational pursuits
- Support and advice in the area of personal presentation and hygiene.
- Transporting and accompanying clients in the community and to appointments
- Medication Administration
- Reporting writing



Community Living - Shared Living

Shared Living provides support to adults with Autism who share their home with other people with Autism and need to be supported 24 hours per day. Support workers work on a roster pattern where they are on duty for either 24 hours at a time, or 2.5 days at a time depending on the home they are allocated to.



The support provided to the individuals in this service is more “hands on” as follows:

- Assistance with personal care depending on the needs of the individual. This may include assisting adults with shaving, showering and toileting.
- Planning and cooking nutritional meals
- Grocery Shopping
- General household duties, including cleaning, washing and ironing
- Light gardening including weeding
- Transporting and accompanying residents in the community and to appointments
- Medication Administration
- Reporting writing
- Supporting the individuals to access enjoyable recreational and social pursuits

Individual Options

Support Workers in Individual Options work with children and adults with Autism who still live in the family home. Support is provided on a 1:1 basis and the ages of individuals range from 5 to 65 years of age. Support workers are allocated to a family based on the needs of the individual clients and the personal attributes of the support worker. Usually support workers are appointed to a family close to their own home; however this is not always possible.

The hours of work are variable, depending on the needs of the clients. There is a 3 hour minimum; however shifts may be up to 10 hours in length. Occasionally support workers may be asked to work overnight shifts, however there is no expectation that every support worker has the capacity to do this. Generally there are hours of work available to people in a variety of circumstances, including parents with children at home and tertiary students.

The duties are varied and include:

- Assistance or advice in relation to personal care and hygiene, depending on the needs of the individual
- Planning and cooking nutritional meals
- Skill development in the following areas:
 - Grocery Shopping
 - General household duties, including cleaning, washing and ironing
 - Budgeting
- Providing the clients with enjoyable recreational pursuits
- Support in volunteering, TAFE or further education
- Transporting and accompanying clients in the community and to appointments (in your private vehicle)
- Medication Administration and reporting writing

Short Breaks for Children

Short Breaks is an essential service that supports aged 6 – 18 to have a break away from home, at the same time as providing families with well-deserved rest and recuperation time.



There are four respite houses in the metropolitan area. Children attend the homes from 5pm Friday to 5pm Sunday every few weeks, with additional options available in the school holidays. Children are supported in groups of 2, 3 or 4, with 2 support workers on duty at all times. Children are matched with other children with similar support needs and interests, with the aim of promoting happy and successful stays where relationships can develop over time. There is a focus on providing fun activities and outings that reflect the interests of the children.

Staff work 50 hour blocks. Occasional part shifts are available at times to cover for sick leave or annual leave requirements, as

well as additional day support on occasion.

The support workers provide care for all of the children's needs during their short break, which includes:

- Support with toileting, showering and dressing
- All cleaning, including laundry and cooking
- Planning and assisting with activities either within the home or in the community
- Medication administration and reporting writing
- Transporting the children in the respite vans

Employment Services

Our Employment Services program is a Government funded specialist employment support program for job seekers with Autism. There are approximately 350 people with Autism accessing the Employment program. There are currently 2 funding streams in the service - Disability Employment Service (DES) and NDIS School Leaver Support Funding (SLES)

The role of a Job Coach includes:

- Modelling appropriate workplace behaviour
- Assisting individuals to learn and complete work tasks
- Liaising with the employee with Autism and their employer
- Breaking down complex tasks into smaller tasks to facilitate achievement and to cater for individual learning styles
- Providing transport to and from work
- Updating job plans and file notes
- Reporting progress to families and other service providers
- Completing administration and reporting tasks



Are there any pre-requisites to employment?

There are no pre-requisites in regard to qualifications, however all support workers are encouraged to work towards a Certificate 3 or 4 in Disability. Supports workers come from all walks of life and bring with them a variety of different experiences. Generally they are people who have a genuine interest in being part of the lives of people with Autism, are passionate about their work, are good at thinking on their feet and have good life skills.

Is training provided?

All support workers are provided with a comprehensive induction program to prepare them for the role. Further training will be provided in more detailed aspects of supporting individuals with Autism at a later date. Even more importantly, training will be provided to equip you with the skills to support the people who you are assigned to.