

Advocacy Brief

# Potential Role of Paraprofessionals Within Child Protection and Care

# Acknowledgements

Produced by Maestral International ([maestral.org](http://maestral.org)), this document reflects the valuable contributions of Beth Bradford, Senior Associate and Anna Jolly, Senior Associate.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of UNICEF Ukraine, whose partnership has made this work possible.

This publication was prepared by Maestral International at the request of UNICEF, with the financial support of the German Government through the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) via the KfW Development Bank. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Maestral International and do not necessarily reflect the views of the German Government and/or UNICEF.

## Introduction

**This document highlights the potential contributions and importance to Better Care<sup>1</sup> of a paraprofessional (or lay, not professionally qualified) social service workforce. Better Care requires a diverse range of social service professionals. This includes social workers, psychologists, educators, and others who are responsible for delivering, providing oversight of, and coordinating services that address child-family separation and enable safe and nurturing family care.**

Ukraine's current challenges, including the multiple risks and stressors that children and families face, and the wide range of services and support required, mean the demands on the workforce are significant. In recent years, however, the number of social workers has decreased significantly, and the small number of these critical professional workers are currently experiencing the challenges of war themselves. **While the demands for social services are at their highest and the professional workforce available to meet these needs is at its lowest, Ukraine must develop strategies and innovative approaches to fill the gaps.**

This document outlines the potential role of paraprofessionals within Better Care. It includes definitions of key terms, roles, rationale for engagement, benefits to the child protection system, required competencies, collaboration with professionals, and challenges they face. This brief also provides examples of paraprofessionals in other contexts. Resources for further reading on the topic and key points for advocacy and planning are included in annexes. It is designed as a reference document or quick guide for UNICEF staff and partners engaged in Better Care to familiarize themselves with the potential roles that paraprofessional members of the social service workforce might play within Better Care and to enable them to advocate for the further planning and development of this group.

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<sup>1</sup> Ukraine's Better Care initiative aims to provide safe, nurturing family care for all children, recognizing the profound impact of war on 7.5 million children. It addresses the rise in child poverty, trauma, and risks of violence, abuse, and family separation. The initiative underscores the social and economic benefits of protecting children from adversity, contributing to their holistic development.

# What Are Paraprofessionals?

## Definition and Overview

A paraprofessional is someone who works alongside or supports the work of a professional in the same field. A recent case study<sup>2</sup> defines a **paraprofessional social worker as supervised staff (or sometimes a volunteer), often community-based, who serves the needs of children and families, especially in contexts where social service systems and the workforce are underdeveloped or severely stretched**. In Ukraine, a paraprofessional social worker might be similar to the category of "the person who cares for the person" (соціальний робітник) i.e., a caregiver, a child care worker in a day care center, an elderly support worker, or a parent educator.

## Distinction Between Paraprofessionals and Professionals

According to the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA)<sup>3</sup>, paraprofessionals:

- > Are individuals typically **not university educated** in a social service field (e.g., social work, psychology, or pedagogy).
- > Function where specific professional categories exist, **working alongside professionals** to make significant contributions to the welfare and quality of life of vulnerable people.
- > Assume **various titles and roles** within the broader social service system, for example parasocial workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers, social care workers, family support workers, or social work assistants.
- > Typically participate in **specialized pre- and in-service trainings that provide foundational skills** in basic social service delivery, tailored to the specific context/community needs.
- > Operate under the **ongoing supervision of professionals**.
- > Can be **paid or unpaid** and may work within governmental structures or civil society organizations. Their roles and titles may vary, for example: volunteers, community workers, or other specific titles related to particular programs or functions.

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2 4Children (2017). The Role of Para-Social Workers in Creating Community-Led Approaches to Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse. Retrieved from [here](#).

3 GSSWA (2017). Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies – 2nd edition. Retrieved from [here](#)

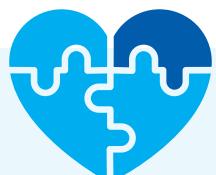
# Rationale for Engaging Paraprofessionals in Delivering Social Services

## Impact of the Conflict on Social Service Workforce

The conflict in Ukraine has significantly disrupted social service capacities, leading to challenges in delivering essential services. Local governments provide social services but have faced disruptions in support and training, resulting in substandard service coverage. Municipalities struggle with limited budgets, hindering their ability to meet the heightened needs in children's services. Although new coordination mechanisms (such as sectoral working groups) for child protection and recovery exist, their effectiveness remains uncertain, particularly in implementing family care policies.

The large humanitarian response faces challenges in coordination with government services. The social service system is strained in providing diverse services, critical for comprehensive child and family support. **The limited numbers of social service workers impacted by war and displacement face ever increasing workloads**, necessitating innovative approaches to help them manage, such as digital applications to facilitate administrative aspects of their work. Economic challenges further strain resources for family care and social services. There is a pressing need for integrated, holistic systems that combine humanitarian efforts with long-term recovery, emphasizing the importance of family-based care and legislative support to avoid unnecessary institutionalization of children.

**Paraprofessionals should never be considered a stand-alone solution. Rather, they should be viewed as part of a larger puzzle that includes professionals, supervision structures, and standardized operating procedures, tools, and documentation processes.**



## Helping to Fill Gaps in the Social Service Workforce

In the current context of Ukraine, paraprofessionals could play an important role in supporting the stretched professional workforce to address the complex social challenges that have emerged from the war. This is especially important given the noted gaps in availability of qualified social service workers and the significant child protection system reforms that are taking place. The complex social challenges to address include widespread poverty, displacement of families both internally and externally, labor market issues, economic difficulties, war trauma, and the reintegration of children from orphanages back into their biological families. Constrained by limited resources, local governments face significant difficulties in effectively addressing these issues.

For example, in 2023, the International Leadership and Development Centre (ILDC) in Ukraine<sup>4</sup> reported that they had trained 26,913 social workers, specialists, and volunteers working in the social sphere. According to the ILDC, their training includes programs on crisis family support, assistance to orphans, group facilitation support, and professional qualifications in social work with families in crisis. These programs are offered in cooperation with educational institutions including NUKMA University and the Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism.

## Complementing the Functions of Qualified Social Service Workers

**Paraprofessionals are important complements to qualified social service workers.** They provide essential field-level support, facilitate community engagement, and assist in the practical implementation of care plans, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and reach of social services.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in Child Protection

**In many contexts, paraprofessionals are able to significantly contribute to the well-being and protection of children. Examples of key roles and responsibilities that paraprofessionals often play in child protection working in close collaboration with and in support of the professional social workers are listed below.**

-  1. **Linking Communities with Formal Systems** serve as a bridge between community-based, often informal systems, and more formal statutory systems. They are instrumental in connecting vulnerable children and their families with necessary social services and resources.<sup>5</sup>
-  2. **Supporting the Strengthening of Families:** Support the identification of families at risk of separation. They can conduct initial rapid assessments to determine eligibility for social services, and social workers can follow up with formal assessments. Paraprofessionals can also support ongoing monitoring and post-placement home visits to complement the professional social worker's visits.

4 Website: <https://ildc.org.ua/en/ildc/>

5 Children (2017). The Role of Para-Social Workers in Creating Community-Led Approaches to Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse. Retrieved from [here](#); and GSSW (2017). Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies – 2nd edition. Retrieved from [here](#)



3. **Supporting Family Reunification** plays an important role in reuniting children with their families. This involves supporting assessments of children and families, preparing the family for eventual reunification, and supporting the post-placement monitoring process, including home visits. Furthermore, paraprofessionals can be trained to deliver information around positive parenting which can be very helpful before, during, and after the reunification process.<sup>6</sup>



4. **Alternative Care** Identify and facilitate alternative care options. Specifically, paraprofessionals, who often have important knowledge of and links to the community, can help promote alternative care and recruit potential alternative caregivers, especially foster parents. As with reintegration, paraprofessionals are well-positioned to support post-placement monitoring, including delivering positive parenting information and identifying any service and support needs.<sup>7</sup>



5. **Identifying and Addressing Child Abuse:** Identify and report violence against children and act as child rights advocates in the community.<sup>8</sup>



6. **Providing Support and Referrals:** Offer direct support to children and families, often serving as the first point of contact into the child protection system. They can provide psychological first aid and an initial assessment of the level of risk involved in a case. They effectively function as a “filter” for cases that require escalation or that can be managed at the community level. This helps manage the workload of overburdened statutory actors by ensuring that only cases requiring their response are referred to them.



7. **Advocacy and Awareness Raising:** Recognizing and building upon the strengths and resources of children, families, and communities,<sup>9</sup> paraprofessionals are instrumental in communicating with and sensitizing community members around child protection risks and protective factors.<sup>10</sup>



8. **Training and Skill Development:** Participate in various trainings, including psychological first aid, trauma-informed care, and family-oriented approaches, such as positive parenting. Paraprofessionals sometimes provide training to others on these topics.<sup>11</sup>



9. **Coordination and Collaboration:** Work with various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, community leaders, and other service providers to ensure a coordinated approach to child protection.<sup>12</sup>

6 Ibid

7 GSSWA (2017). Op cit.,

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 CRS (2017). Op cit.,

11 International Leadership & Development Centre (ILDC) (2023). Presentation “The Needs and Roles of Paraprofessionals (Volunteers) in Social Work with Families and Children.” August 2023.

12 GSSWA (2017). Op cit.

# Benefits of Including Paraprofessionals in Child Protection Systems

Based on the guiding principles of the GSSWA (2017), the CRS (2017) case study document and the ILDC (2023) presentation, paraprofessionals could serve as a vital addition to the existing social service workforce in Ukraine and, more specifically, in Better Care for the following reasons:

- > **Bridging the gap:** Providing essential support services, they help to bridge the gap between the population's needs and the limited capacity and reach of government services. This is crucial in areas with limited numbers of professional social service workers.
- > **Enhancing the Capacity of Local Services:** With appropriate training and support, they can provide additional human resources and expertise to assist in implementing various social services, case management functions, and awareness-raising efforts.
- > **Family-Based Care Support:** They play a critical, forward-facing, community-based role, directly engaging with children and families for home visits (post-placement, in cases of reunification, alternative care placement, and for families at risk). Their access to the community they serve allows for regular monitoring, enabling professional social workers to provide more intensive monitoring when needed. This can be especially helpful for foster parents in supporting the well-being of the children in their care, as well as their own well-being. This contributes to the retention of foster parents, as well as the recruitment of additional foster parents (as evidence shows, the best recruitment strategy is word of mouth from existing, supported, and satisfied foster parents).
- > **Addressing War Trauma and Displacement:** In the aftermath of conflict and displacement, paraprofessionals can provide psychosocial support and counseling to individuals and communities. They play a pivotal role in helping people cope with the traumatic impacts of war, contributing to their emotional and psychological well-being.
- > **Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Their deep understanding of local contexts, cultures, and social dynamics fosters trust and ensures culturally sensitive interventions, making them essential to building and sustaining community resilience.
- > **Economic and Social Stabilization:** By addressing immediate social needs and fostering the stability of families and communities, they play a crucial role in the broader context of rebuilding and recovery efforts.
- > **Increased Reporting and Identification of Child Protection Issues:** Their presence in communities leads to greater awareness and increased reporting of child protection issues, which is essential for the timely and effective safeguarding of children.

# Core Competencies of Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals require a multidimensional skill set, including core competencies; technical skills in legal frameworks and case management; ethical adherence to confidentiality and diversity; and ongoing development opportunities, including professional training and career advancement.<sup>13</sup> They also require professional social workers providing supportive supervision, regular guidance, technical support, and helping them address professional development needs.

<p><b>Core Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, crucial when dealing with vulnerable children and families.</li><li>- Communication Skills: These include cultural competency, basic listening and responding skills, and effective communication regarding available services.</li><li>- Resilience: The capacity to work in challenging situations, including handling trauma-sensitive cases.</li><li>- Family-Oriented Approach: Facilitating secure attachments between children and their families and supporting family well-being.</li></ul>	<p><b>Technical Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Knowledge of Legal Framework and Child Protection Systems: Understanding child rights and the ability to work effectively within the child protection system.</li><li>- Child Placement and Abuse Response Skills: Developing and implementing child placement plans, preventing trauma, and responding to child abuse cases.</li><li>- Working in Conflict Contexts: Understanding political violence in war conditions and providing psychological first aid.</li><li>- Monitoring and Evaluation: Skills to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of services and interventions.</li></ul>
<p><b>Ethical Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Confidentiality: Upholding privacy and discretion in handling sensitive information about children and families.</li><li>- Respect for Diversity: Recognizing and respecting cultural differences and diverse backgrounds in service delivery.</li><li>- Commitment to Ethical Principles: Adherence to ethical guidelines in all aspects of work, including respect for community and familial cultural contexts.</li></ul>	<p><b>Development and Training Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Professional Development: Ongoing training and education to enhance skills and knowledge in child protection.</li><li>- Career Ladder Accessibility: Opportunities for career advancement through further education and recognition of work experience.</li><li>- Leadership and Management Training: Developing skills in organizing, leading initiatives, and managing projects.</li><li>- Collaborative Learning: Opportunities to work under supervision and participate in job sharing and shadowing for skill enhancement.</li></ul>

13 Sourced from ILDC (2023) and GSSWA (2017). Op cit



2 March 2025, Lviv – Yulia reads aloud to her sons, three-year-old Mykyta and two-year-old Bohdan, during a quiet afternoon at home.

## Collaboration with Professionals is Essential

- **Understanding the Scope of Work:** Their scope of work often includes identifying and reporting violence against children, referring children and families to service providers, and monitoring families – they act as an extra set of hands for professional social workers and can provide timely response given they are generally community-based. More complex aspects of case management (including assessing children and families and developing a case plan) are typically retained as the responsibility of a professional social service worker.
- **Communication and Reporting Protocols:** Paraprofessionals are often the first point of contact in the community. They gather critical information and observations that must be accurately communicated to professionals for further action. Regular and structured reporting ensures that all parties are informed and can respond appropriately to the evolving needs of children and families.
- **Supervision and Support:** Professionals provide guidance, mentoring, and feedback, enhancing the skills and effectiveness of paraprofessionals. They also provide supportive supervision,<sup>14</sup> including regular meetings to discuss cases, address challenges, and provide advice. This not only aids the professional development of paraprofessionals but also ensures adherence to ethical standards and best practices in child protection.

14 GSSW (2017). Op cit.

# Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

- **Limitations in Training and Scope:** Paraprofessionals may face challenges due to limitations in their training and the scope of their roles. While many receive basic training, they may lack the depth of professional training required for complex cases. This gap can lead to inefficiencies and a lesser impact on child welfare. To mitigate this, both pre- and in-service training, as well as supportive supervision from professional social service workers, are essential. Training should develop specific competencies in identifying risks, referring to social services and support programs, ongoing monitoring of the status of children and families, and providing psychological and positive parenting support. Regular professional development opportunities can also help paraprofessionals to expand their knowledge and stay updated on the latest child care and protection practices.<sup>15</sup>
- **Addressing Burnout and Turnover:** The high emotional toll and stress associated with child protection work can lead to burnout and high turnover rates. To address this, organizations need to promote self-care practices and offer burnout prevention training. This includes providing access to psychological support, fostering a supportive work environment, and ensuring a manageable workload. Additionally, recognizing and valuing the work of paraprofessionals by offering opportunities for career advancement can make paraprofessional engagement more attractive, enhance job satisfaction, and reduce turnover.<sup>16</sup>
- **Ethical Dilemmas and Decision-Making:** Paraprofessionals frequently encounter ethical dilemmas in their work, often stemming from a lack of clear guidelines or support in decision making processes. To tackle this, it is crucial to establish a robust ethical framework and clear decision-making protocols. Regular training sessions on ethics and legal standards in child protection can provide paraprofessionals with the knowledge to navigate these challenges. Additionally, establishing a system of supervision and mentorship can promote ethical and effective decision-making in complex cases.<sup>17</sup>

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15 ILDC (2023). Op cit.

16 Ibid

17 GSSW (2017)

# Country Case Studies

## United Kingdom

**Family support workers** in the UK provide practical and emotional support to foster families, offering guidance on parenting, household management, communication with biological families, and connecting them with community resources. Some may also work directly with children in foster care, supporting their education, emotional well-being, and contact with birth families. They usually require Level 3 or 4 vocational qualifications in childcare, social care, or a related field. Some employers prefer additional qualifications like a National Diploma in Children and Young People's Workforce or experience working with families.<sup>18</sup>



## Germany

**Educational Assistants (Erzieherassistenten):** Educational assistants or social pedagogic assistants work in settings that include foster care, providing support to children, and assisting in educational and social development activities. They do not require a full degree in social work but often have vocational training in related fields.<sup>19</sup>



## The Netherlands

**Pedagogical Workers (Pedagogisch Medewerkers):** Pedagogical workers support children in various settings, including foster care. They focus on the child's development and well-being and work closely with foster families. Training for these roles typically includes vocational education in child care or social pedagogy.<sup>20</sup>



## Sweden

**Support Assistants (Stödassisterter):** Support assistants work in social services, including areas related to child welfare and foster care, providing assistance and support to families and children. These positions may require relevant education from upper secondary school or vocational training, rather than a university degree in social work.<sup>21</sup>



18 <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Developing-your-workforce/Guide-to-developing-your-staff/Statutory-and-mandatory-training.aspx>

19 <https://www.jugendfreiwilligendienste.de/jugendfreiwilligendienste/jugendfreiwilligendienste>

20 [https://www.boom hogeronderwijs.nl/actueel-item/80-2991\\_Congres-Puur-Pedagogiek](https://www.boom hogeronderwijs.nl/actueel-item/80-2991_Congres-Puur-Pedagogiek)

21 <https://startsteget.se/familjehem/familjehem-uppsala/>

## France

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**Social Assistants (Assistants Socio-Éducatifs):** Social assistants work with families, children, and individuals in need, including those in the foster care system. They provide social support, assist with administrative tasks, and contribute to the well-being of children and families. Training for these roles often includes specialized courses and diplomas in the social sector.<sup>22</sup>

## Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Some key best practices and lessons learned in working with paraprofessionals, particularly in the context of child protection and care, are as follows:

- > **Training and Professional Development:** Ensuring that paraprofessionals receive comprehensive training is crucial. This includes both a thorough initial training (often a one-month training before they start their work) and ongoing professional development (in-service training to refresh and further strengthen practical competencies and skills). Curricula typically include child protection and trauma-informed care of children; supervision and middle management competencies;<sup>23</sup> provision of psychosocial support,<sup>24</sup> and positive parenting<sup>25</sup> and trauma-informed approaches.<sup>26</sup>
- > **Supervision and Support:** Supportive supervision, regular case review meetings, coaching, and feedback are essential to maintain the quality and effectiveness of paraprofessionals' work. This also includes support for their personal and professional growth.
- > **Community Integration:** Paraprofessionals are often more effective when integrated into the communities they serve. This local connection enhances their ability to understand and address specific community needs, as well as to build trust with community members.
- > **Recognition and Certification:** The formal recognition of paraprofessionals, possibly through a certification process, is important to validate their role and contributions. This recognition can enhance their motivation and respect they receive from professional peers and the community.

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22 <https://insereco93.com/events/webinaire-anct-less-pour-renforcer-le-lien-social-dans-les-territoires-fragiles/> provides information on the training and qualifications needed

23 The Child Welfare League of America has various resources available. See [here](#)

24 IFRC Psychosocial Centre offered resources like online psychological first aid training, which can be adapted and utilized by paraprofessionals. See [here](#)

25 Save the Children has a source titled "Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting" (2016). Retrieved from [here](#)

26 SAMHSA (2015). Trauma-informed Approach and Trauma-Specific Interventions, retrieved from [here](#).

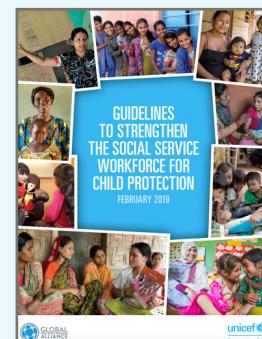
- > **Role Clarity and Job Descriptions:** Clear definitions of the roles, responsibilities, and skills required for paraprofessional positions improves effectiveness. This clarity helps in setting expectations and accountability.
- > **Career Advancement Opportunities:** Providing paraprofessionals with career ladders or paths for advancement can be motivating and can contribute to recruiting and retaining motivated and skilled individuals in the social service sector.
- > **Adaptability and Contextual Understanding:** Paraprofessionals should be adaptable and able to modify their approaches based on the specific contexts and changing dynamics, especially in emergency or humanitarian settings.
- > **Self-Care and Burnout Prevention:** Providing support for self-care and strategies to prevent burnout is important, as paraprofessionals often work in challenging conditions that can impact their well-being.
- > **Incentives and Compensation:** While many paraprofessionals may begin as volunteers, offering appropriate incentives and compensation can help sustain their work and acknowledge the value of their contributions.
- > **Cultural Competence:** Paraprofessionals should be trained to respect and incorporate knowledge of community and familial cultural contexts. This cultural competence is crucial in delivering services that are relevant and sensitive to the needs of diverse groups.
- > **Case Management Skills:** Paraprofessionals often assist professionals in case management. It is important to equip them with skills, such as identifying, assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and closing cases.
- > **Coordination with Other Services:** Effective coordination with other stakeholders, such as government bodies, NGOs, healthcare providers, and educational institutions, is essential. This ensures that children and families have access to a comprehensive range of services.
- > **Child-Centered and Family-Focused Approach:** Paraprofessionals should prioritize the best interests, safety, and well-being of children, while taking into account the family's wellbeing.
- > **Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge:** Training should include indigenous knowledge and approaches adapted to specific national and cultural contexts.
- > **Empowerment and Participation:** Encouraging the participation and empowerment of children and families in the case management process is vital. Paraprofessionals should engage them actively in finding solutions to their own problems.

*Sources: ILDC (2017); GSSW 2015 & 2017; Maestral (2023) & UNICEF (2019)*

# Annex 1: Resources and Further Reading

## Recommended Manuals and Guidelines

- > **Guiding Principles for the Development of Para Professional Social Service Workers.** This comprehensive guide outlines the principles and competencies required for effective paraprofessional social service work. It emphasizes a strengths-based approach and the importance of community and cultural context in social service. **Source:** GSSW (2015). Guiding principles for the development of para professional social service workers. Retrieved from [here](#).
- > **Case Study on Child Protection within OVC Programs: The Role of Para-Social Workers.** This case study provides insights into the implementation of community-led approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse. It highlights the crucial role of para-social workers in these interventions. **Source:** Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (2017). The Role of Para-Social Workers in Creating Community-Led Approaches to Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse. Retrieved from [here](#).
- > **Guidelines to Strengthen Social Service for Child Protection.** A detailed guide focusing on enhancing child protection services. It includes best practices, case studies, and strategies for implementing effective social service interventions. Source: UNICEF (2019). Guidelines to strengthen the social service workforce for child protection. Retrieved from [here](#).



## Online Resources and Communities

These are resources to provide a solid foundation for paraprofessionals seeking to deepen their knowledge and skills.

- **International Leadership and Development Centre (ILDC) – [ildc.org.ua](http://ildc.org.ua):** A resource center offering training, support, and guidance for social workers, specialists, and volunteers in the social sphere. It also provides access to a range of training programs and materials.
- **Global Social Service Workforce Alliance – [socialserviceworkforce.org](http://socialserviceworkforce.org):** An online platform offering resources, training materials, and a community for social service workers worldwide. The site contains a wealth of information on best practices, research, and policy developments in the field of social service.
- **Better Care Network – [bettercarenetwork.org](http://bettercarenetwork.org):** An online hub providing resources and information on family-based care for children. The network offers access to a wide range of tools, research papers, and guidelines for practitioners in child care and protection.



01 September 2025, Mykolaiv, Ukraine – A student of Mykolaiv Lyceum No. 53 distributes textbooks in the school's new underground shelter on the first day of in-person learning after more than three years of remote education.

## Annex 2: Key Points for Advocacy and Planning

This Advocacy Brief for Paraprofessionals in Child Protection and Care provides comprehensive insights into the pivotal role of paraprofessionals in the social service sector, particularly in child protection and care. Key points include:

- > **Definition and Role:** Paraprofessional or lay social service workers (no professional qualification as a social worker or psychologist), are often community-based and possibly volunteer workers. They work alongside and with the support of professionals, providing essential services in areas where social service systems are underdeveloped or strained, especially in crisis situations such as in Ukraine.
- > **Roles and Responsibilities:** Working under the guidance and support of professional social workers, paraprofessional social service workers may carry a range of responsibilities, from linking communities with formal systems, supporting family reunification, addressing child abuse, and providing support and referrals, to advocacy and awareness-raising.
- > **Benefits:**
  - Paraprofessionals bridge gaps in service delivery, enhance local service capacity, engage and empower communities, and contribute to economic and social stabilization.
  - They can act as additional eyes and ears for the professional workforce when they are stretched.
  - They can provide timely response because they are usually community-based.
  - They can “filter” and manage low-risk cases, freeing up time for professionals to handle high-risk and statutory cases.
  - By helping to manage the professional workforce’s workload, they enable higher quality professional services, mitigate the risk of professionals’ burnout, and support retention.
- > **Competencies:** Essential competencies include empathy, communication skills, resilience, knowledge of legal frameworks, and an understanding of conflict contexts, supplemented by ethical principles and ongoing professional development.
- > **Collaboration with Professionals:** Effective collaboration and clear communication protocols are essential for paraprofessionals to work efficiently with professionals.

- > **Challenges and Mitigation Strategies:** Addressing training limitations, burnout, ethical dilemmas, and ensuring proper decision-making processes are critical for the effectiveness of paraprofessionals.
- > **Best Practices:** Comprehensive training, supportive supervision, community integration, and career advancement opportunities
- > **Resources for Further Reading:** Various manuals, guidelines, and online resources are available for paraprofessionals to enhance their knowledge and skills.

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# for every child,

Whoever she is.

Wherever he lives.

Every child deserves a childhood.

A future.

A fair chance.

That's why UNICEF is there.

For each and every child.

Working day in and day out.

In more than 190 countries and territories.

Reaching the hardest to reach.

The furthest from help.

The most excluded.

It's why we stay to the end.

And never give up.