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Issued on behalf of SSSC as part of the Social Work Changes Lives Campaign

More Scots Applying to be Social Workers

Admissions to social work degree courses are on the rise in Scotland, showing that more people are looking to the profession as a career. Early indications from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the regulatory body for social work qualifying training, suggest that admissions will increase by 8% from last year.

The SSSC annual trends report monitors the delivery and quality of social work degree courses and also identifies changes in the number and type of people applying. Last year, 2008/09 they recorded an intake of 647 admissions but estimates for 2009/10, still to be confirmed, are putting the intake at 700 admissions.

There is also an increase in the number of people applying, particularly younger people. The number of young people (16-24 years) applying increased from 31% in 2006/7 to 41% in 2008/9 while the number of older people applying during the same period (35-44 years) dipped to 17%. This may be because the age barrier that used to apply to social work courses has been lifted and more school leavers are aware of the opportunities.

“It is encouraging to see more people choosing social work as a career”, says Anna Fowlie, Chief Executive of SSSC. “We have a commitment to the widening participation of people in social work amongst underrepresented groups so that the workforce more accurately reflects the diversity of our communities. For example, there was a rise in the number of people who disclosed a disability entering courses to 7% in 2008/9 compared with the previous year.”

“The diversity of people now working in social work was also reflected in the make-up of the finalists for our recent Care Accolades, often challenging the traditional stereotype of the social worker.”

“Social work is a complex and challenging career, which is often misunderstood by the public and the media. These new figures show that more people see it as an attractive career path. This is reflected in wider research for the Social Work Changes Lives campaign, which shows that perceptions of social work are improving”.

SSSC also highlight reports of an increasing quality of applications from younger people looking to enter the social work degree, including reflective statements from applicants that are much more aware of the role of social workers and the complexity of social work.

The Social Work Changes Lives campaign is supported by SSSC and the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) and aims to improve public understanding of social work services in Scotland. The research it recently published into changing perceptions of social work showed that 47% of respondents social work positively compared to 38% the previous year. More significantly was that the proportion of people that were unsure about their view of social work had fallen from 43% to 31%.

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Notes to editors:

- The Scottish Social Services Council is responsible for raising standards in the Scottish social service workforce. As the regulatory body for social work qualifying training in Scotland, the SSSC has responsibility for quality assuring the undergraduate and postgraduate social work degree courses delivered by Scotland's universities.
- The 2008/2009 annual trends report will be published fully in September 2010.
- Estimates of the expected total intake of admissions have been indicated for the 2009/2010 academic year and are still to be confirmed.
- The SSSC Care Accolades take place on Friday 11 June – more information about the finalists can be found at <http://www.sssc.uk.com/sssc/news-and-events/care-accolades.html>
- The Social Work Changes Lives Campaign is a joint campaign by the Association of Directors of Social Work and the Scottish Social Services Council. Launched in April 2009 it aims to improve public understanding and awareness of social work in Scotland.
- The Association of Directors of Social Work is a membership organisation which aims to promote and protect the interests of social work, social care and the people that use its services.