

# Hays Social Care nurturing a new generation of social workers

Submitted by: pr-sending-enterprises

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Hays Social Care, specialist recruitment company, has reported that the recent government announcements to invest in the recruitment of social workers is likely to provide a temporary boost to the numbers employed in the industry, but a longer term action plan is needed to combat the skills shortages that are crippling the industry.

"There has been systematic underinvestment in social care (<http://www.hays.com/socialcare/>) for many years, which has resulted in a severe shortage of experienced social workers - the latest figures say that one in seven social work positions (<http://www.hays.com/socialcare/socialworkjobs.aspx?Ranked=true&RankedId=1228>) are currently vacant. The perception of the industry as a whole needs to be addressed and a defined career structure needs to be introduced, so that social work graduates are not lost to the industry," commented John Faraguna, the newly appointed Managing Director of Hays Health and Social Care.

A number of reasons have been put forward to explain the lack of qualified social workers. Salaries for experienced frontline social workers are not as competitive as those for nurses and teachers, and there is a lack of financial assistance to help support them through their ongoing studies. Unlike nurses, social workers (<http://www.hays.com/socialcare/QualifiedSocialWorker/>) do not receive any funding for their studies. The sponsorship of university places that has just been announced is a small step to encourage workers to pursue these careers.

The majority of social workers in the UK studying for their social work degrees have either changed careers or had previous experience of social care work and decided to retrain later on in life. Local authorities are increasingly looking overseas as a viable solution to plug the skills gap but the figures are still not stacking up.

Hays Social Care has found that those authorities who have tapped into the overseas talent pool have generally been impressed with the calibre of candidates, which has led the company to receive excellent feedback in almost all cases. However, Hays warns that this is just a drop in the ocean. Paul Marriott, Operations Director for Hays Social Care, remarked, "Putting measures in place to retain the existing workforce is just as important as attracting international candidates or the considerable numbers of social workers that have left the profession. Social workers need the support of management, regular supervision and ongoing training to be provided."

There are also differences depending on the social work specialization and this is another prevalent factor which has led to some professionals leaving the industry altogether. "Children's social workers tend to be stressed, work long hours, have to juggle increasing caseloads in what are often extremely challenging environments. We don't seem to get the same feedback from those working within Adult Services," noted Paul.

While there are an increasing number of individuals who are studying towards a social work degree straight from school or college, finding work experience can be fraught with obstacles. Placing newly qualified social workers into permanent positions is often difficult and many find they have to work

initially as unqualified social workers. "Two good placements under your belt will greatly increase employability" concluded Paul.

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#### About Hays Social Care

Hays Social Care is part of Hays plc, the leading global specialist recruitment group. It is market leader in the UK and Australia, and one of the market leaders in Continental Europe. The Group employs 8,294 staff operating from 380 offices in 28 countries across 17 specialisms. For the year ended 30 June 2008:

- the Group had revenues of £2.5 billion, net fees of £786.8 million and operating profit before exceptional items of £253.8 million;
- the Group placed around 80,000 candidates into permanent jobs and around 300,000 people into temporary assignments;
- the temporary placement business represented 49% of net fees and the permanent placement business represented 51% of net fees.

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