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Audit of Social Care Student Numbers and Programme Providers in Ireland

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Introduction

Arising from concerns regarding the dramatic growth of Higher Education social care programme providers since 2002 and the increase in student intake nationwide, an audit of social care student numbers was undertaken between January and March 2009. Draft findings were presented at the 1st Irish Association of Social Care Educators (IASCE)/Irish Association of Social Care Workers (IASCW) Conference in Sligo (25-26 February 2009).

The figures below are the final tally from all 16 programme providers.

Main findings

- In 2002, there were seven Social Care Programme Providers nationwide (Institutes of Technology in Athlone, Cork, Dublin, Sligo, Waterford; St. Patrick's College, Carlow (now Carlow College); and the Open Training College). Today, there are 16 Higher Education providers (listed in tables and charts below), and additional providers in the Further Education sector.
- These 16 providers presently have a total of **4198** registered students. Of these, **1303** will graduate with Level 7 or Level 8 professional social care qualifications in June 2009 (compared to approximately 500 graduates in 2002).
- How many Social Care Workers are employed in Ireland? An exact figure is not available. The HSE 'Health Service Personnel Census, September 2008' recorded 3405 Social Care Workers in the HSE and HSE funded agencies (this excludes the private sector and agencies).

The trade union impact guesstimates a total of 3000-5000 members who work as Social Care Workers.

Finally, the Health and Social Care Professional Council guesstimates that some 8000 people will be eligible to register with the statutory Social Care Workers Registration Board when it is established.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- A profession that employs between **5-8000** people cannot possibly absorb **1303** graduates annually. This growth is unsustainable and uncoordinated.
- We have inadequate First Destination Return (FDR) data on social care graduates (ie, data on graduate employment and/or further study 12 months after graduation) and no career path data. The Irish Association of Social Care Educators (IASCE) should lobby the HEA to reduce duplication of course provision.

- Reduced student intake should occur immediately, for September 2009. Again, IASCE should lobby HEA on this matter.

Table 1 Social Care Student Numbers 2008-2009, F/T Level 7 Students as of February 2009

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
AIT	58	84	71	213
Carlow College	63	65	63	191
CIT	120	98	77	295
DKIT	37	32	35	104
IT Carlow	71	22	25	118
IT Sligo	70	70	73	213
IT Tralee	54	40	45	139
WIT	158	49	97	304
IT Blanchardstown	35	38	27	100
Total				1677

Table 2 Social Care Student Numbers 2008-2009, P/T or WBL (Work-Based-Learning) Level 7 Students as of February 2009

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
AIT	24		24	48
Carlow College		19	19	38
DIT	20	19	20	59
GMIT	27			27
IT Carlow	105	69	53	227
IT Sligo	30	11		41
IT Tralee			22	22
OTC	122	127	110	359
WIT	28	13		41
IT Blanchardstown	11	18	19	48
Total				910

Table 3 Social Care Student Numbers 2008-2009, F/T Level 8 Students as of February 2009

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 (ab initio, 'add on' or 'progression')	Total
AIT	52	56	45	51	204
Carlow College				41	41
CIT				47	47
DIT	36	39	44	18	137
DKIT				24	24
IT Sligo				93	93
IT Tralee				33	33
LIT	96	82	54	49	281
WIT	75	68	76	91	310
IT Blanchardstown	55	35	34	31	155
Total					1325

Table 4 P/T WBL Level 8 Students as of February 2009

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
AIT	71			71
LIT				4
NUIG	130	115	19	264
Open Training College				23
IT Tallaght	60			60
Total				422

Table 5 Total Level 7 & 8 Social Care Students, as of February 2009

WIT	523
IT Tralee	194
LIT	281
AIT	536
ITB	303
DIT	196
GMIT	27
IT Tallaght	60
Carlow College	270
Open Training College	382
IT Carlow (f/t)	118
IT Carlow (p/t)	227
DKIT	128
CIT	342
IT Sligo	347
NUIG	264
Total	4198

Table 6 Total of Professionally Qualified (Level 7 and Level 8) graduates expected in June 2009

WIT	163
IT Tralee	56
LIT	49
AIT	200
ITB	77
DIT	82
Open Training College	126
IT Carlow (f/t)	25
IT Carlow (p/t)	53
Carlow College	123
DKIT	59
CIT	124
IT Sligo	166
Total	1303



