

Quarter of new social workers in England remain jobless after a year

Kirsty McGregor
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A quarter of the newly qualified social workers who graduated last year in England are unemployed, the General Social Care Council has revealed.

Data released to *Community Care* show that, of the 4,082 newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) who registered with the GSCC after graduating in 2010, 27% remain unemployed.

Rates of unemployment are much higher in England than Wales (7%) and Scotland (3%). The Northern Ireland Social Care Council could not provide comparable figures.

About two-thirds (64%) of NQSWs in England found employment in social care soon after graduating, the GSCC found, although it is not clear how many of these were qualified social worker roles.

But in Wales and Scotland, the proportion employed in social services rose to 89% and 97% respectively.

[Special report on newly qualified social workers](#)

Ray Jones, professor of social work at Kingston University, said there were several possible reasons for the higher rates of unemployment in England, the most obvious being the public sector spending cuts.

"Many employers are reducing the size of the workforce, making it difficult for NQSWs to gain a first job," he said.

He also pointed out that increasingly stretched social work teams have less time to offer NQSWs protected workloads and enhanced supervision.

PROPORTION UNEMPLOYED



Number of social workers registered after graduating in 2009-10

England	Scotland	Wales
4,082	774	230

Percentage employed in social care or social work

64%	97%	89%
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Source: The General Social Care Council, Scottish Social Services Council and the Care Council for Wales

Owen Davies, public affairs adviser for the College of Social Work, added that the government's personalisation agenda seems to have led to a reduction in the number of social worker posts in adults' services.

"Employers have to take their responsibility to prepare the next generation of social workers seriously - and that involves taking on NQSWs," he said.

However, both Jones and Davies warned against placing a cap on the number of social work degree places in England.

"It is very risky, because I don't think our workforce planning is good enough," said Jones.

Davies agreed: "We need a supply and demand model we can all rely on. I don't think the College could support a cap until that model is agreed."

The GSCC said the unemployment figures were recorded when NQSWs applied to join the register, which in some cases was soon after passing their exams.

As such, some graduates may have since found employment but not yet told the regulator.