Career Aspirations
A brief study of 4th year Social Studies in Athlone Institute of Technology

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Declaration

I declare that this project is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies in Social Care (part-time). It is entirely the work of the author and has not been submitted to any other university or higher education institution, or for any other academic award in this institute. Where work of other people has been used, it has been fully acknowledged and referenced.

Signed: _______________________                       Date: _____________

Nollaig Mahon              8/3/2011
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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the motivations and career aspirations of twenty, 4th year social care, students in Athlone Institute of Technology. The focus of the research is introduced briefly followed by a review of the relevant literature relating to social care. A quantitative method in the form of questionnaires was utilised to investigate student motivations for entering social care and their career aspirations.

The most important findings in relation to the objectives were that, there were, a combination of motivational factors identified, revealing altruism as the primary motivational factor. Student’s career aspirations were also reflected in the study demonstrating the diverse range of roles within social care.

The findings correlate with relevant literature in the area. The study concludes with some recommendations.
Introduction

The aim of this research study is to explore the career motivations and aspirations of fourth year social care students.

The objectives are to investigate why fourth year social care students choose to study social care and to identify the different career aspirations of social care students.

The study uses national and international research to compare and contrast statistics with those recorded in this survey. The focus of this information relates to factors influencing the student’s choice of course at A.I.T. and their future career aspirations. The importance of this research is to highlight why a person chooses to work in the caring profession and the type of work they wish to obtain. Thus informing policy makers of the type of people who are working in the caring profession looking after society’s most vulnerable people.

Chapter one contains the introduction to the research study. Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature pertaining to social care including definition, history, motivation and career choice. Chapter three concentrates on the methodology used. Chapter four presents the results of the research. Chapter five discusses the findings, comparing and contrasting them to the findings in the literature review. This is followed by a conclusion and recommendations.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This literature review is an evaluation of current literature on social care as a profession, the definition and history of social care, the differing areas of work within the field and motivational factors for choosing a caring profession. The review opens with a definition of social care. The reports used in section 1.2 – 1.5 are the work of recognised specialists in the relevant area.

1.2 Definition of Social Care

Social Care has been defined by The Joint Committee for Social Care Professionals (an expert group comprising of the National Health Service, Trade Unions and the Resident Manager’s Association) as

“The professional provision of care, protection, support, welfare and advocacy for vulnerable or dependent clients, individuals or in groups. This is achieved through the planning and evaluation of individualised and group programmes of care, which are based on needs, identified in consultation with the client and delivered through day to day shared life experiences. All interventions are based on established best practice and in depth knowledge of lifespan development”

This definition highlights the complexities of social care work and the broad spectrum which it encompasses. It emphasises a structured approach to care and highlights the importance of the relationship and partnership that exists in social care.

Vulnerable clients are those who experience marginalisation, disadvantage, who have special needs or that are sick. Byrne (2001) described them as being people who have difficulty in, or could not be expected to meet one or all of their own needs be it social, emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual.

Social care practitioners work with vulnerable clients in a variety of settings, namely, with children in residential care; people with alcohol or drug dependency; people with a learning or physical disability; older people and immigrants to Ireland (Share and Mc Elwee, 2005).
For the purpose of this research social care is defined as working with marginalised people in a participatory capacity to enable and assist them in meeting their own needs where possible.

1.3 History of Social Care in Ireland

Social care work in Ireland is an emergent profession having primarily come about in the last forty years. Historically, social care services were provided mainly by religious orders and governed by the (pre-independence) 1908 Children’s Act, a principle piece of legislation enacted by the British state which formed a framework for services (Wells, 2000).

The Child Care Act 1991 was the first piece of child welfare legislation to be enacted since the foundation of the state and represented a landmark in the history of child care in Ireland (Ferguson and Kenny, 1995). It followed publication of reports relating to child sexual abuse cases; primarily the Kennedy report (1970), the Task Force Report on Child Care Services (1980) and the Kilkenny Incest Case. These reports recommended strategies and policies be developed and adopted to support families in need and the imminent closure of industrial and reformatory schools replacing them with small community based group homes (Department for Education, 1970). The Task Force Report stipulated that individual and continuing care should be provided, this statement provides the framework that informs the development of social care practice today, These reports advocated the need for the provision of professional care to families with ‘special needs’.

These three reports were fundamental in taking Social care in Ireland from its residential base (the term recommended by the Kennedy Report to replace the term ‘industrial school”), that catered for hundreds of children and extending it into more community based (smaller group homes) activities and strategies (Mc Elwee, 2000), .

More change has occurred in social care since the 1990’s than in the previous 100 years in line with other first world nations with the implementation of the United Nations Children’s Rights Convention (UNCRC). It is now seen as necessary to focus on those with ‘special needs’ in a more holistic sense and to adopt a much more community based approach to social care work. This shift moves from a protective model of working with people to a more participatory model where professionals participate fully with those concerned in order to achieve positive outcomes. The proposed Children’s Rights Bill would certainly be a move forward in terms of social care in Ireland.
1.4 Career Choices

In Ireland, social care workers may be employed by the state (statutory) sector (for example, the Department of Health and Children; Education and Science or Justice, Equality and Law Reform); in the non-governmental sector (in organisations such as Barnardo’s, the Brother’s of Charity, Focus Ireland, among others, many of which are fully or partially funded by the government); or in community-based organisations (such as community development projects).

Social care practitioners may work in a wide variety of areas in partnership with those who experience marginalisation, disadvantage or have special needs. The main areas of work are in residential care, with older people, those with a disability, are homeless, have a drug or alcohol dependency or recent immigrants to Ireland. In the early 2000’s, the Joint Committee on Social Care Professionals identified that out of 2904 social care practitioners 71 were working in community child care, 1214 in children’s residential care and 1,619 in intellectual disability services. (Share and Mc Elwee, 2005).

However it is important to note that the area of social care is currently awaiting statutory regulation. This will determine the definition and role of the profession and distinguish them clearly from those grades that are not subject to statutory registration.

1.5 Motivation

The basic principle of motivation is that one carries out an action in order to derive some gain from it. Behaviour is motivated by the rewards one receives as a result of that action. Rewards may be extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation refers to a desire to perform a task for an external reward such as salary that is achieved as a result of completing the activity. Intrinsic refers to an internal characteristic, such as personal satisfaction, that is gained from the activity itself (Messer, 2001).

In order to investigate the motivating factors influencing people to study social care the author reviewed a selection of literature relating to the caring profession inclusive of nursing and social work. The research suggests that people who choose careers in caring occupations are influenced by both personality traits and personal experience.
Personality traits are internal characteristics that people display over time and across situations. In the case of social care professionals, characteristics include reliability, trustworthiness, altruism, empathy, compassion and open-mindedness (Irish Association of Social Care Educators, 2005).

Personal Experience is also identified as a key factor in choosing an occupation. The culmination of childhood experience and family background can motivate a person in choosing a career in a caring profession. Cree (2007) found that childhood and family background, experience of education and work culminated with the influence of significant individuals were persistent themes identified by those in the caring profession in explaining their choice of career.

Cree (2007) identified ‘Working to help others’ as a key motivational factor in social workers. It is through a culmination of personality traits and personal experience that influences one’s career choice.

Care work is akin to the idea of being a profession or vocation. People choose it in order to do a good job and make a difference.

1.6 Conclusion

A review of the literature suggested that social care has changed dramatically in recent years and this change is ongoing. Whilst other researchers may have done similar research, the fact is that it was done in a different context and at a different time means that this work is unique and necessary.

We are currently at an unprecedented time in our economy facing huge economic instability. This is having a profound effect on individuals and society. As social care is related to people within society, societal change is inevitably impacting on our social care services. The type, nature and intensity of social services required is constantly changing.

In addition to having an effect on services the current climate is influencing the type and amount of students entering third level to study social care. This study is necessary to know what currently motivates individuals to enter this field and their career choice. For this reason this research is necessary. It fills a hiatus in current understanding of the relevant area. It is the most current research conducted in this area.
Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

There are six parts in this section. These are Research method, Participants, Procedure, Ethical considerations, Limitations and Method of analysis.

2.2 Research method

There are two main approaches to collecting data: qualitative and quantitative. The author considered the merits and limitations of both before deciding on a particular approach.

The qualitative method emphasises quality, attempting to gather high quality amounts of information. It is descriptive and used in case studies. It is defined as a ‘research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’ Bryman (2004: 19-20). It uses non-numerical data and has more general research questions (Punch, 2005 p28). Research methodologies associated with this approach include observation, diaries, interviews and focus groups with predesigned questions, though a formal questionnaire will not be administered. It attempts to understand individual’s perception of the world. The target information need not be as measurable and definitions are not as important as meaning can be explored in the interview.

Quantitative research is information that can be collected, counted and calculated. It emphasises quantity and attempts to gather relatively large amounts of information. This method can be totalled and various mathematically methods can be used to assess the trustworthiness of the data (Adams, 2007:321). Bryman (2004:19) described it as ‘a research strategy that emphasises quantification and analysis of data’. This method uses ‘structured and predetermined research questions, conceptual frameworks and designs’ (Punch, 2005:28). It reflects the practices and norms of the scientific or positivist model believing that social reality is an external, objective and measurable reality (Sarantakos, 2005). That is the target information must be measurable and definable with definitions shared mutually between respondents. Research methodologies associated with this approach include quasi and natural experiments and surveys and generally analysed statistically (Share, 2009:154).
The chosen research method is the quantitative method as this is the most appropriate method to answer the research question posed and to satisfy the aims and objective of this particular research project. This method allowed for a significant amount of data to be collected in a brief period of time.

2.3 Participants

The sample group consisted of a representative sample of twenty fourth year social care students in A.I.T selected randomly from a class of eighty students.

2.4 Procedure

On compiling the questionnaire the author conducted a pilot study using informal gatekeepers to test the questionnaire. The pilot study allowed the author to look at the logical flow of the questionnaire and establish the time frame required to complete it. The questionnaire was subsequently re worded and elements altered to ensure the design was correct and only obtain valid information, amending any ambiguous or leading questions. As it is imperative that the respondent can understand the questionnaire, it was necessary to ensure misinterpretation be avoided by the pilot study.

In order to conduct the study the author sought permission from the group’s lecturer to distribute the questionnaires amongst the sample group during the lecture. Once permission was received a date and time was set for distributing the questionnaires. The author spoke to the group and explained the purpose of the research and addressed the issues mentioned in the cover note and answered any questions that the group had. The questionnaires were collected on completion. The data was then analysed and illustrated graphically. The design of the questionnaire was determined by the aims and objectives of the study in order to gain the relevant data needed to justify the research. The questionnaire was comprised of open and closed questions. The closed questions gave precise and direct answers, whilst the open questions provided more scope for detailed responses.
2.5 Ethical considerations

Whilst carrying out any type of research it is necessary to act in an ethically appropriate manner in order to maintain respect for individuals (Adams, 2007, 326). Such research with humans in health and social care is now subject to approval by a research ethics committee (Adams, 2007, 328). In this study it was achieved by selecting a competent sample group, which is a group of people who are able to process information about their potential participation in a research study and come to a rational decision about their choices. The sample group were informed of the purpose of the study. They had the right to participate voluntarily and anonymously, with the right to ask questions and decline from participating if they so wished. They were free to skip questions if they did not wish to answer them or to leave the room if they felt they did not want to contribute any further. There information was further protected by the questionnaires being destroyed post examination. This was stated in the form of a cover letter. All participants were subsequently thanked for their time and participation.

2.6 Limitations

The main limitation for this research was time. Strict deadlines mean that information must be gathered promptly in order to facilitate compilation and analysis. As with all questionnaires, the validity of the research depends on the honesty of the participants, 100% honesty and integrity cannot be guaranteed.

2.7 Method of analysis

After receiving the completed questionnaires, the author analysed the responses and used Microsoft excel to transfer the data onto graphs and tables. A combination of charts, graphs and tables were used to display the findings of the research. The author used thematic analysis to determine the themes that were concurrent throughout the responses of the open ended questions.
Chapter 3: Results

3.1 Introduction

The results section illustrates the findings derived from twenty questionnaires which were distributed to fourth year social care student within A.I.T. The findings are illustrated in narrative and graphical form and will be presented under the two main objectives of the study.

In order to analyse the results of the questionnaires were reviewed and summarised. The data were collected and recorded in graph format. The study found that the sample group consisted of 85% females and 15% males. Eighty percent of the sample group were aged between twenty one to twenty five years of age whilst the remaining 20% were in the twenty six to thirty six year age bracket.

Themes emerged from specific question groups which are discussed under the research objectives as headings. Questions 1- 4 deal with factors influencing the participant’s decision to study social care. Questions 5 -10 are concerned with the participant’s previous experience of care. Questions 11-14 deal with possible career options and areas of professional interest. Finally, question 15- 18 explores the perceived importance of subjects within the social care course.

The author looked for recurring patterns that emerged from the information collected.

Any perceived discrepancies in percentages are as a result of multiple indications by the respondents.

Objective 1: To investigate why 4th year social care students choose to study social care.

Under this objective ten questions examined student’s reasons for choosing the social care course at A.I.T.

Question 1 Are you currently working in the social care field?

The study found that 35% of the sample group were currently working in the area an average of thirteen hours per week. 43% of these worked with people with a learning
disability, 29% worked with the elderly, 14% worked with people with a physical disability and 14% worked with young people.

**Question 2** How did you become aware of the course?

There were a total of twenty-five indications. 7 students became aware of the course through the college prospectus, 8 through a careers advisor, 5 through a friend and 5 through a teacher. Interestingly, none of the group learned of the course online.

![Sources of Information](chart.png)

**Question 3** Was it your first course choice?

65% selected social care as their first course choice. 35% indicated first course choices included teaching, nursing and hotel and catering.

**Question 4** Please identify what factors were influential in your decision to study social care?

The most significant factors identified in choosing to study social care were ‘to help people’ (50%); ‘it looked like a good course’ (30%) and ‘meaningful/rewarding work’ (20%). The least significant factors identified through the questionnaire were only offer (35%), financial reward (25%) and geographical location (20%).
Question 5  Have you previous experience of providing care?

20% stated they had no experience in providing care. 20% stated that a friend/family member had provided care. The other 60% had personally provided care.
Question 6 Have you previous experience of receiving care?

10% stated that they had personally received care. 20% stated that a friend/family member had received care.

Question 7 Do you have previous work experience in social care?

Of the respondents 70% said yes and the remaining 30% said they had no previous experience.

Question 8 If yes, in what area?

Question 8 found that student’s were experienced in the area of intellectual disability(45%), youth(40%), physical disability(25%), older persons(20%), child residential (15%), community child care (5%), ethnic minorities (5%) and domestic violence (5%). Areas of addictions and homelessness were areas where students had no experience.
Question 9 Duration of Experience.

64% of the students stated that they had less than one years experience in the area of social care. This statistic correlates with the fact that 45% of the respondents identified that they participated in a practice placement. 22% had 1-3 years experience, whilst 7% had 3-5 years experience and a further 7% had over 5 years experience.
**Question 10** If you have had experience of providing or receiving care, did this influence your decision to study social care?

95% stated their experience did influence their decision with 10% stating their experience had a major influence. Of the replies only 5% stated that their experience did not influence their decision to study social care.

![](image)

**Objective 2: To identify the different career aspirations of social care students.**

Under this objective eight questions were asked in order to examine where the students visualise themselves in the future.

**Question 11** What area of social care would you most like to work in?

Question 11 examined most preferred areas of work in social care. Children’s residential (65%), community child care (60%), youth work (45%) and the area of learning disability (25%) were identified as the preferred areas. Interestingly, these were areas where the students had some experience.
Question 12  What area of social care would you least like to work in?

Areas identified here include older persons (30%), people with addictions (30%), ethnic minorities (25%) and people with a physical disability (20%).
**Question 13**  Will you consider further education once you finish your degree?

65% stated that they would consider further education. Areas of further education identified included Masters in Social Care (25%), Masters in Family Support (5%), counselling/psychology (5%), sociology (5%), teaching (5%) and speech and language (5%).

**Question 14**  Where do you see yourself in twelve months time?

80% of participants believed they would be working in the social care field. 10% indicated that they would continue studying. 30% would consider working abroad in the social care area.

**Question 15**  What social care subject do you feel was most relevant in preparing you for social care work?

Practice Placement was identified by 55% as the most relevant subject followed closely by psychology 50% and applied social studies 45%.

**Question 16**  What social care subject do you feel was least relevant in preparing you for social care work?

70% of students identified research as the most irrelevant subject on the course, followed by social care management at 20%.

**Question 17**  Is there any subject you feel could be added in order to enhance the course for future students?

75% would add an additional subject to the course. Interestingly, none of the respondents thought the course would benefit from the addition of a language, 40% believed that a practice placement would enhance the course, 25% would add disability studies as a subject, 20% would add youth work as a subject and a further 15% would like to see practical aspects such as first aid, manual handling and sign language added to enhance the current course.
Question 18  How would you rate your level of satisfaction with the relevance of the course to social care work?

65% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the course, 30% of the respondents saying they were very satisfied and a mere 5% respondent stating that they were dissatisfied with the course.
Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings with particular reference to the research objectives. The author determined what motivated students to choose the course, their opinion on it and their career aspirations. Significance is highlighted with reference to appropriate findings in the reviewed literature. The findings are compared and discussed under the two main objectives.

4.2 Motivations for choosing to study social care

The results of question 4 found that 45% of respondents chose to study social care as they ‘wanted to help others’. Clarke (2007) and Donelan (2007) carried out similar studies on social care students in A.I.T. and found that a significant number of respondents chose to study social care as they wanted to help others. This concurs with the results of the author’s current study. Donelan suggested that the respondents wished to gain an identity associated with helping others. This was supported by the results of question 3 in the current study where all respondents chose a third level course that involved working with people. The results are not surprising as one would expect that students undertaking a social care course would want to help people.

Clarke states that ‘wanting to help people’ is known as Altruism, an unselfish concern for another person’s welfare, closely linked to helping behaviour. This is interesting as much research has identified altruism, empathy and compassion as key personal qualities required to be a social care worker (Bernstein and Nash, 2005 and Christian and Townsend, 2004). It is therefore evident that the people choosing to study social care already have these personal attributes and they are somehow innate in those who seek social care work as an occupation. The results correlate with Maslow’s (1954) hypothesis on motivation. Those in the caring profession obtain rewards through intrinsic means thus getting satisfaction from helping others.

It could be argued that not all helping behaviour is altruistic. As the definition states that it is an ‘unselfish concern’. The author would argue that there are selfish motives in ‘helping behaviour’ such as it benefiting the person who helps. It is likely that the person who helps another person will experience the joy of helping others. It is therefore difficult to
separate selfish motives from altruistic motives. The author’s opinion on what motivates the individual back’s up Maslow’s theory on motivation which states that people satisfy various personal needs in the context of their work.

Question 4 identified financial rewards as the least significant factor in the respondent’s decision to choose social care along with it being the ‘only offer’ and ‘geographical location’. This result would enforce the aforementioned research on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Respondents choose the course because they wanted to help others and not because it was their only offer or for financial reward.

One clear finding of the results was that 80% of respondents had some experience of care. Research has shown that it is not unusual for people to consider an occupation in a caring profession if they have had previous experience of care in their personal lives (McElwee, 2003). The findings are comparable with Wells et al (2000) and Mc Elwee (2003) findings that personal experience influences one’s decision to study social care. This is supported by Cree (2007) who said that childhood experience and family background can motivate a person in choosing a career in a caring profession. It is widely known that personal experience in our childhood impacts and influences later decisions in our lives.

The findings of this research noted that 95% of respondents stated that their experience affected their decision to study social care. This backs up the findings of questions 4-9 where their experience helped to shape their decision to study social care.

### 4.3 Career Aspirations of social care students

The study found that child residential care was cited as the most preferred area of work, followed closely by community child care, youth work and the area of learning disability. This supports research done in 2000 by the Joint Committee on Social Care Professionals (JCSCP) where a significant percentage of social care professionals were working with young people in residential units and in intellectual disability services.

These findings illustrate the shift in social care work as demonstrated in the literature review under ‘The History of Social Care in Ireland’. Where the service was once based in ‘reformatory’ schools it has moved forward and is now primarily based in children’s residential. Social care provision is continually changing and there is a shift emerging that will become more community based, focusing on participatory methods, that is involving the
child and the family in decisions which affect them in line with current thinking and best practice as underpinned by the UNCRC, current legislation and the definition of social care given in the Literature review.

In reality that will mean the use of residential services will become less prevalent and the social care practitioner will work more in the capacity of family support and community childcare. This will become even more relevant with the enactment of the proposed children’s rights bill. It will reflect itself with a change in thinking for the practitioners resulting in student’s still choosing children’s services but in a community based setting.

The results of question twelve showed that the least preferred areas of work were older persons, people with addictions, ethnic minorities and those with a physical disability. These findings are hardly surprising. Clarke (2007) and Donelan (2007) also found that the majority of students did not wish to work with the elderly. Donelan suggested that this would have a negative impact for the future of social care. However, it could be argued that it will not, as care of the elderly has long been associated with the medical model, dominated by the nursing field (Share, 2009).

Whilst it is acknowledged that social care practitioners possess a wide skills and knowledge base that can be applied to the needs of a broad range of people, including the elderly, social care has predominately been associated with the care of children.

Regarding the lack of interest in relation to ethnic minorities one could argue that the social care worker may find cultural differences, a lack of insight and the language barrier a difficulty in working with this group.

Question 13 found that 65% would consider further study. The results of Question’s 15 and 16 looked at the relevance of the course subjects. The participants found psychology, Applied Social Studies and practice placement to be there most relevant subjects. They suggested that research is the most irrelevant subject. The findings of this research are limited due to the fact that the respondents had just completed their own piece of research and may in fact be suffering from research fatigue. Should the respondents be asked the same question at a later date it is probable that they will have found their research to have been greatly beneficial to them particularly in the course of further study. Question 18 found that almost all of the respondents stated that they were satisfied overall with the course.
4.4 Evaluation of Method

The quantitative research method enabled the author to target a specific sample group in a short period of time gaining the required information. The use of questionnaires allowed respondents to answer openly and honestly whilst remaining anonymous.

4.5 Limitations of Method

There were some limitations to this research. The most apparent of these being departmental regulations on the size of the group, thus limiting the size of the sample for the research and the context in which one could administer the questionnaire. Other limitations included time constraints limiting the amount of information which could be gathered and word count limiting the amount of information that could be included in the study.

The author suggests that future researchers compare and contrast social care students to those in an unrelated discipline to see the difference in motivational factors in course choice. The application of a personality test to the respondents would also be interesting to see what characteristics emerge.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the career motivations and aspirations of social care students within A.I.T. A quantitative method of research was deployed to obtain the relevant information.

Overall the results found minimum change in A.I.T. since the survey carried out by Donelan in 2007. The clearest finding to emerge from the survey was that respondents chose the course because they wanted to help others. This concurs with all relevant research in the area. Much of the literature in the area suggests that personal experience and the influence of significant others has an influence on ones career choice. The study supported these findings with 95% of respondents stating their previous experience impacted on their course choice.

Having explored the motivations the study investigated career aspirations. The results indicated that the most popular choice was the area of child care and youth followed closely by intellectual disabilities. Similar to Donelan’s findings the study found that students were not interested in the area of older persons. These findings concur with those discussed in the literature review.

5.2 Recommendations

The area of social care for older persons is an ever increasing area as a direct result of an aging population. Considering that this is an area that instils little interest amongst social care students the author would suggest that these areas be promoted as an area of interest in the social care course.

Based on the results from this dissertation there is a need to promote the social care course online. As none of the respondents learned of the course via the internet, it would be advisable to promote the course, perhaps through facebook or twitter.

The author believes that there is a need for students to be better informed in relation to career opportunities, emphasising the difference between the different areas of work. As the area of social care covers a diverse area it is necessary to enable the student to distinguish between roles that require a professional qualification and those that do not.
Cover letter

I am a fourth year social studies student doing a research project as part of my degree. As part of this I am required to compile and administer a questionnaire. It would be greatly appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire.

The following questionnaire has been compiled to examine the motivations and career aspirations of social care students in Athlone Institute of Technology. The study is required as part of the Bachelor of Arts (honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care.

The completion of this questionnaire should take approximately 10-15 minutes. It is completely anonymous and confidential. Any information gathered from the questionnaire is for research purposes only. All completed questionnaires will be destroyed on completion of research.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanking you for your time and co-operation. It is much appreciated.

____________________

Nollaig Mahon.
Motivations and Aspirations of Social care students Questionnaire

Please attempt to answer all questions and tick the relevant boxes provided.

Gender (please tick)                      Male                  Female
Age                                               17-20             21-25            26-36           36+ 

1. Are you currently working in the social care field?
   Yes
   No

If yes, how many hours? What?

Children’s residential       Ethnic minorities
Community child care       Older persons
Youth work                   Homeless people
People with a learning disability
People with an addiction

Other (please specify)______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

2. How did you become aware of this course what course??

Career Advisor
Friend / family member told me
College prospectus
Teacher / lecturer
3. Was it your first course choice?
   Yes [ ]
   No [ ]
   If not, what was your first course preference? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

4. Please identify from the following the most important factors in your decision to study social care. (Please rate 1 being the most significant factor and 5 being the least significant factor)
   Looked like a good course [ ]
   Was the only course I was offered [ ]
   Want to help people [ ]
   Meaningful and rewarding work [ ]
   Financial reward [ ]
   Geographical location [ ]
   Would be cheaper to live at home and study [ ]

5. Have you ever had any personal or professional experience in providing care?
   I have no experience [ ]
   (If no continue to question 10) [ ]
   I have personally provided care [ ]
   A friend/ family member has provided care [ ]
   I have participated in a practice placement [ ]
   Other (please specify) ________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

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6. Have you ever had any personal or professional experience in receiving care?

I have no experience  

(If no continue to question 10)

I have personally received care  

A friend/ family member has received care  

Other (please specify)  ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

7. Do you have previous work experience in social care?

Yes  

No  

(If no continue to question 10)

8. If yes, in what area?

Children’s residential  

Community child care  

Youth work  

People with a learning disability  

People with an addiction  

Ethnic minorities  

Older persons  

Homeless people  

People with a physical disability  

Other (please specify)  ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

9. Duration of Experience

Less than 1 year  


10. If you have had experience of providing or receiving care, did this influence your decision to study social care?

Yes
No
Some influence
Major influence

11. What area of social care would you most like to work in? (please rate, with no 1 being the most preferred area of work and 10 being the least preferred)

Children’s residential
Community child care
Youth work
People with a learning disability
People with an addiction
Other (please specify) ______________________________

12. What area of social care would you least like to work in? (please rate, with no 1 being the most preferred area of work and 10 being the least preferred)

Children’s residential
Community child care
Youth work
People with a learning disability
People with an addiction
Other (please specify) ______________________________
13. Will you consider further education once you finish your degree?

Yes  [ ]
No   [ ]

*(If no continue to next question)*

If yes, what course ________________________________
_______________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

14. Where do you see yourself in 12 months time?

- Working in the social care area [ ]
- Further study [ ]
- Unemployed [ ]
- Working in another area [ ]
- Abroad working in social care [ ]
- Abroad unemployed [ ]
- Working at home [ ]
- Looking after my kids [ ]
- Other *(please specify)* ________________________________

15. What social care subject do you feel was most relevant in preparing you for social care work?

- Psychology [ ]
- Law [ ]
- Applied Social Studies [ ]
- Research [ ]
- Community Development [ ]
- Social Care Management [ ]
- Practice Placement [ ]
16. What social care subject do you feel was least relevant in preparing you for social care work?

- Psychology
- Law
- Applied Social Studies
- Research
- Community Development
- Social Care Management
- Placement

17. Is there any subject you feel could be added in order to enhance the course for future students?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what subject?

- Language
- Disability Studies
- Practice Placement
- Youth work
- Other (please specify) __________________________

18. How would you rate your level of satisfaction with the relevance of the course to social care work? Please tick.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Thank you for your time and co-operation.
References


