

Shaping the future of social care

Guardian extract - Amy Taylor

Figures released by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service show that social work degree applications for courses starting next September have increased by more than 40% and some universities are looking at innovative ways to improve the skills of the children's services workforce.

Last month, Bath Spa University launched a new child protection qualification for non-graduate staff such as social work assistants, classroom assistants and nursery workers.

David Niven, a former chair of the British Association of Social Workers, explains that, unlike much existing training, the certificate in child protection studies allows professionals to build towards achieving a degree while still working full-time. Niven, who approached the university with the initial idea for the course, sees non-graduate workers as playing a key role in child protection.

"They are the eyes and ears of the community. They are the ones who have direct daily contact with the child and therefore an awareness of their behaviour. Giving them more knowledge helps to protect children," he says.