

## ANNEX A - Student Support Arrangements

### Engagement Questions

1. The NHS Bursary Scheme's intention is to act as an incentive to encourage people to train and work in Wales, in your view, is the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme, in its current format achieving this and why/why not, please state here.

In England the removal of the bursaries resulted in a substantial decrease in applications for nursing and some allied health professions, particularly from mature students, with specific areas of provision being more severely impacted than others (eg mental health nursing, learning disability nursing).

We understand from HEIW that the numbers of students who have opted to have their course funded via the student loans system have been very small. This indicates that the scheme in its current format acts as an incentive to encourage people to train and work in Wales.

All of the options proposed represent significant change, which has implications for the balance of funding between the health and education budgets. Any model selected for implementation needs to be very well informed by modelling of those costs, and market tested with students.

We were surprised to see that the options below did not include the status quo, given the relative success of recruitment to nursing and AHP provision compared to England, following the changes to funding there. We think that Welsh Government should consider retaining the status quo.

2. Our previous consultation provided a clear indication of support for the continuation of the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme. In your view (in ranked order) what do you think are the most important aspects that should be highlighted to attract people to study, train and work in Wales?
  - Improving employment opportunities
  - Achieving a qualification and pursuing an interest in the subject
  - Receiving a bursary to cover tuition fees
  - Good maintenance package to cover living costs

Based on the previous consultation we have narrowed the responses received to the following two statements, which do you think acts as an incentive to study, train and work in Wales?

- Higher maintenance package to cover living costs but the need to pay for tuition fees which only need to be repaid once students reach a certain threshold
- NHS Bursary to cover tuition fees which does not need to be re-paid but with a lesser maintenance package to cover living costs

- It might also have implications for how placements are established, and the role of HEIW in workforce planning, as effectively there would be no quota for places. This means that some areas of provision might over-recruit, and institutions may not wish to offer subjects where there is low demand from students (eg shortage areas identified above). This has implications for workforce planning, including regarding the proposed workforce strategy for health and social care, which is currently under consultation.
- Any shift to funding of this provision via the student loans system for tuition fees would have implications for HEFCW. These include changes to fee and access plans, to include nursing and AHP provision, and implications for the institutions in terms of spending a minimum proportion of their income from these plans on widening access and promoting higher education, as they would need to spend an increased amount of funding based on the inclusion of more fees-based students
- If nursing and AHP students are integrated into the student loans systems for the purposes of fees, HEFCW would need to include this provision in work we are doing to establish cost relativities between subjects. This includes identifying whether the provision would attract additional subject funding (eg in England, work carried out by KPMG resulted in a conclusion that nursing provision cost more than £9k per student per year [Table 1 page 4](#)). If this provision was then included in HEFCW's funding allocations, this would require the provision of additional funding to HEFCW to ensure that the changes did not impact on the funding available for other subjects costing more than £9k to deliver that are currently funded through HEFCW allocations to higher education providers.
- There could be implications for HEFCW resulting from changes to maintenance funding, as some of the nursing and AHP students would be eligible for maintenance support. This could impact on the funding available to support other priorities, unless funding was made available from the health budget to cover these costs.
- The current method of commissioning this provision, as we understand it, is intended to fully fund the direct cost of delivery of provision but relies on the Universities to provide the wider overhead costs that contribute to the student experience. Transferring the funding from the current method to a fee based method is likely to require additional funding to that currently provided.
- Should the Augar proposals be introduced in England there would be an impact on the fee that could be charged in Wales. Currently we are not aware of any work being done in Wales to assess the full cost of provision of health subjects. However, it is likely that many of these subjects will cost more than the current fee level which will result in the need for additional funding to meet the cost of this provision.

- The options proposed represent significant change, with implications for the balance of funding between the health and education budgets, which we have outlined in response to the individual options. Any change needs to be very well informed by modelling of those costs, with appropriate amounts of funding transferred to the education budgets.
- The health budget currently provides the funding for training nursing and AHP students. These training costs cannot be passed to the Student Loans Company and/or Education without a transfer of funding. The current method of commissioning this provision, as we understand it, is intended to fully fund the direct cost of delivery of provision but relies on the Universities to provide the wider overhead costs that contribute to the student experience. Transferring the funding from the current method to a fee based method is likely to require additional funding to that currently provided.

3. If you have been, or now are, in receipt of an NHS Wales Bursary, what influenced your decision to study and commit to working in Wales?

Not applicable

4. Based on your experiences, what barriers are there that prevent individuals from studying/training and working in Wales?

The option for health students in Wales to have their course funded via the student loans system has not been taken up extensively to date. This, together with evidence regarding recruitment in England following the change to funding of health provision, indicates that changes to the current system might pose a threat in terms of recruitment.

5. What could we as Welsh Government do to eliminate these barriers?

Welsh Government needs to be clear that any changes it proposes to make to supporting students of health subjects are not detrimental to recruitment and / or the attractiveness of the profession to prospective students.

6. Below are the top four options that emerged from the last consultation, what in your view are the benefits/risks of each of the options:

- Healthcare students receive the standard maintenance support package through Student Finance Wales. An NHS Bursary would cover the funding of full tuition fees up to a maximum and an additional funding element for additional costs for clinical placements. – this will not be subject to an agreement regarding post-qualification employment

#### Benefits

- Students would have lower debt than those undertaking non-health qualifications.
- Students would have a higher level of maintenance funding than at present, through a mixture of grants and loans. This would ease concerns that these students struggle to hold down part-time employment as a result of their programme requirements.
- The likelihood that they will find professional employment post qualification, means that the repayment of the loan should be less difficult than for students in less vocational courses.

#### Risk

- Students might not choose to work in the NHS in Wales following completion of their course, which means that funding spent on their training would not benefit Wales.
- Students who receive most of their maintenance support via loans might be deterred from undertaking this provision.
- Potential implications for the WG education budget, which could impact on the funding available to deliver the Diamond review recommendations.

- Healthcare students receive the standard maintenance support package through Student Finance Wales. An NHS Bursary would cover the funding of full tuition fees up to a maximum and an additional funding element for additional costs for clinical placements – subject to agreeing a post-qualification employment period.

#### Benefits

- Students would have lower debt than those undertaking non-health qualifications.
- Students would have a higher level of maintenance funding than at present, through a mixture of grants and loans. This would ease concerns that these students struggle to hold down part-time employment as a result of their programme requirements.
- The likelihood that they will find professional employment post qualification, means that the repayment of the loan should be less difficult than for students in less vocational courses.

#### Risk

- Need to be clear how funding could be recouped from individuals should they not work in the NHS in Wales for the post-qualification employment period. This could also include regarding students who drop out, or are considered unfit to practice, before the end of their course. It would be helpful for Welsh Government to investigate whether this might be achievable via a method similar to student loan repayments. Were it to be done via court orders, debt collectors etc, this could have unintended consequences.
- A detailed impact assessment should be carried out regarding recouping any funding, including impact on wellbeing and mental health.

- Clarity would be needed regarding what type of post-qualification employment would meet requirements, eg to include care settings
- Students who receive most of their maintenance support via loans might be deterred from undertaking this provision.
- Potential implications for the WG education budget, which could impact on the funding available to deliver the Diamond review recommendations.

- Healthcare students receive the standard maintenance support package and partial funding of tuition fees (e.g. 50%) through Student Finance Wales. An NHS Bursary would cover the remainder of the tuition fee and an additional funding element for additional costs for clinical placements – subject to agreeing a post-qualification employment period.

#### Benefits

- The likelihood that they will find professional employment post qualification, means that the repayment of the loan should be less difficult than for students in less vocational courses.
- Students would have lower debt than those undertaking non-health qualifications.
- Students who drop out would bear some of the cost of their education, without the need to recoup funding (other than through existing mechanisms)

#### Risks

- There could be an impact on recruitment, depending on how debt-averse the applicants are, which ultimately could impact on future workforce availability, including in shortage areas.
- Clarity would be needed regarding what type of post-qualification employment would meet requirements, eg to include care settings
- Need to be clear how funding could be recouped from individuals should they not work in the NHS in Wales for the post-qualification employment period. This could also include regarding students who drop out, or are considered unfit to practice, before the end of their course. It would be helpful for Welsh Government to investigate whether this might be achievable via a method similar to student loan repayments. Were it to be done via court orders, debt collectors etc, this could have unintended consequences.
- A detailed impact assessment should be carried out regarding recouping any funding, including impact on wellbeing and mental health.
- Potential implications for the WG education budget, which could impact on the funding available to deliver the Diamond review recommendations.
- Institutions would need to change fee and access plans, to include nursing and AHP provision, with implications in terms of spending a minimum proportion of their income from these plans on widening access and promoting higher education, as they would need to spend an increased amount of funding based on the inclusion of more fees-based students.

- As noted under question 2, if a subject costs more than the fee cap to deliver, additional funding would need to be transferred from Health to the education budget in order to provide appropriate funding to HEFCW.
- Any system involving splitting of fee contributions between health and the student loan company would be complex and careful modelling would be required. Any such model is likely to be difficult for prospective students to understand, and as such might impact on recruitment.

- Healthcare students receive the standard fee support package through Student Finance Wales. An NHS Bursary would cover living costs and an additional funding element for additional costs for clinical placements – subject to agreeing a post-qualification employment period.

#### Benefits

- Students who drop out would bear the full cost of their fees without the need to recoup any funding (other than through existing mechanisms)
- The likelihood that they will find professional employment post qualification, means that the repayment of the loan should be less difficult than for students in less vocational courses.

#### Risks

- There might be a substantial drop in applicants for health courses, as in England, which would impact on future workforce requirements, particularly in shortage areas
- Clarity would be needed regarding what type of post-qualification employment would meet requirements, eg to include care settings
- Students would have less maintenance funding than under the student finance Wales option
- Institutions would need to change fee and access plans, to include nursing and AHP provision, with implications for institutions in terms of spending a minimum proportion of their income from these plans on widening access and promoting higher education, as they would need to spend an increased amount of funding based on the inclusion of more fees-based students.
- As students would be responsible for the repayment of their fees, there could be communications implications around recouping bursary costs should students not complete the post-qualification employment period, which might deter students from applying.
- Need to be clear how funding could be recouped from individuals should they not work in the NHS in Wales for the post-qualification employment period. This could also include regarding students who drop out, or are considered unfit to practice, before the end of their course. It would be helpful for Welsh Government to investigate whether this might be achievable via a method similar to student loan repayments. Were it to be done via court orders, debt collectors etc, this could have unintended consequences.
- A detailed impact assessment should be carried out regarding recouping any funding, including impact on wellbeing and mental health.

- As noted under question 2, if a subject costs more than the fee cap to deliver, additional funding would need to be transferred from Health to the education budget in order to provide appropriate funding to HEFCW.

7. We are gauging interest in running workshops to discuss these questions and related questions, please circle if you be would be interested in attending a workshop? This is likely to take place early September.

Yes

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.**

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