

9<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Dear Baroness Dido Harding,

**RE: NHS Improvement's Interim Workforce Implementation Plan: Student nurses**

We are writing to invite you to a meeting with student nurses at the University of Hull, as part of your review of the NHS workforce.

As you are aware, after years of pay restraints, cuts to training budgets and the Government's failure to invest in and plan appropriately for the workforce this has resulted in more than 100,000 vacancies across the NHS.

We are sure that we can agree on the need to drive up numbers of healthcare students to cover this shortfall. Sadly, we are still failing to invest in healthcare education. In particular, nursing students are now facing increasingly unmanageable living costs that are yet to be recognised by our flawed student finance system.

Student Finance

One of the major problems student nurses face is the lack of consideration that, while most other students complete two semesters in an academic a year, nurses complete three, and yet funding fails to reflect this major difference. In addition, in their final year of training, funding for nurses stops in May, despite students being required to continue training until September in order to complete their courses.

As we are sure you'll agree, nursing is challenging enough without the financial hardship inherent within the system, especially for those student nurses with children who are facing summer childcare costs while on their placement.

Student nurses in Hull have shared the following concerns with me:

*"In the final year, we have a decreased student loan and student NHS bursary, although S16 is the last cohort with the bursary. This could be reviewed regarding SFE, especially considering we are on placement until September- we are student nurses- we don't have a summer! We still need to travel to placement throughout the entire summer."*

*"I feel like nursing student are not supported for the whole year. We don't get a break over summer like other students, yet we are treated the same. The last student finances are paid in April, and not again till September. Why isn't this broken down to give a summer payment too?"*

*"I don't think it's fair how we get the same student finance as everyone else but*

*we are at university for a hell of a lot longer as well as having to 6 weeks placements in a full-time job for free – it's ridiculous"*

*"Student finance loans are not fit for purpose for student nurses, the differences between being a student Nurse and a regular student are not taken into consideration. Nursing is challenging enough without the added financial pressures. Even if we had to pay all the money back to student finance fine, but we should at least be able to afford the fuel to get to the placement and not be in such financial hardship because we're choosing to be nurses."*

### Cost of Living

Now that the NHS Bursary has been abolished, nurses on placement are being asked to work without payment in order to complete their training. Students must pay to travel to placements, park on site, and for students with families and other caring responsibilities, being unable to work to pay for childcare etc alongside their studies is adding extra strain:

*"Students have to pay to park at University, a permit is £50 a year, which is acceptable for someone like me travelling from Doncaster. Although, when we go on placement we are forced to pay for more permits, sometimes for each individual placement if on hospital/ NHS grounds. I propose a 'medical/ health permit'. A permit that can be used by nursing, health and medical students at University, but one that can also be used whilst on placements. Surely University and the NHS trusts we are allocated for placement can sort something out?"*

*"Students having to pay for parking whilst on placements another expense we can't afford."*

*"I definitely think free parking whilst on placement is fair, they have your services for free for 37.5 hours a week, at least they can give us free parking."*

*"Travel cost to placement has been a massive issue for me. I am Grimsby based and had my last TWO placements in Scunthorpe costing me £600 plus in fuel with no help whatsoever. This definitely needs looking into, in fact, the whole financial aspect for student nurses needs to be addressed, and training for this profession alone is stressful without having to worry about money."*

*"The financial pressure is far more prominent than the actual pressure of doing the course...it's ridiculous. We've all made the sacrifice/chosen to do this etc - but if/should I ever have to stop doing my degree it would be because I'm struggling to keep a roof over my mine and my children's heads...due to the dismal financial situation we are put into."*

*"As a mature student who has given up a full-time job to retrain as a nurse, something I have wanted to do for many years, it seems unfair that my maintenance loan is based on my husband's income. Because we are just above the household income threshold, I can only get the basic maintenance loan. As someone mentioned earlier, we are not millionaires and having lost my full-time wage what we're left with is not enough for a family of 4. Now applying for extra jobs to try and make up the shortfall, not easy with kids, uni and placements!"*

Student nurses in Hull and across the country are struggling to cope with the financial pressures of training under the current system of student finance. At a time when the shortages of NHS staff risk impacting patient outcomes, we must be encouraging prospective nurses to apply, not taking their labour for granted and ignoring the concerns they continually share.

We are therefore hoping that you will take up our offer of a meeting with nursing students at the University of Hull to listen and respond to the points they raise as part of your workforce review. We look forward to hearing from you to arrange a mutually convenient date and time.

Yours Sincerely



Diana Johnson  
MP for Hull North



Isobel Hall  
President, Hull University Union