

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

19th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
20 December 2023

PE2039: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Petitioner | Amy Lee |
| Petition summary | Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours. |
| Webpage | https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2039 |

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 3 August 2023.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 2,761 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE2039: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Petitioner

Amy Lee

Date Lodged:

03/08/23

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours.

Previous action

Wrote to Ash Regan MSP. A member of her staff got back to me and provided me with the links to make my own petition.

Background information

As a student nurse, I feel we should get paid while on placement. We are supposed to be there for the learning experience to complete our electronic Practice Assessment Documents) and be supernumerary. However, during my last 3 placements I have been used as a spare member of staff, covering either for staff off sick or for staff not attending bank and agency shifts.

I was a clinical support worker before becoming a student nurse, taking a £1000 pay cut to better myself and study.

NHS paid student nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic, so I don't know why this can't continue. The longest placement we do is three months and they already use us in their working numbers which should not be the case. Doing a placement while also writing essays and preparing for exams is not an ideal situation to be in. This adds up to a 50+ hour week, and can lead to burnout, financial difficulties and poor mental health.

We get a bursary but this doesn't even cover some people's mortgages. Being paid for placement work would help to reduce the number of people dropping out due to financial difficulties.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.The logo for The Information Centre, featuring the text 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark blue background.

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2039 – Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Background

The petition is calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council requires students on a 3-year programme to complete 2,300 hours clinical practice and 2,300 hours theory before they are eligible for registration.

Due to the practice hours required, student nurses and midwives typically have shorter leave periods in comparison to other undergraduates.

In 2020, the Scottish Government increased the nursing and midwifery student bursary to £10,000 for eligible students¹. This is a non-means-tested and non-repayable bursary.

Other means of support are available to student nurses and midwives, including;

- Initial expense allowance
- Clinical placement expenses
- Dependants Allowance
- Single Parents Allowance
- Childcare Allowance for Parents
- Disabled Students' Allowance

¹ Those who meet the General Residence Conditions can apply for funding (see [SAAS](#) for more info)

Students who are in financial difficulty may also be able to access the Nursing & Midwifery Discretionary Fund, which is administered by higher education institutions on behalf of the Scottish Government.

The following table shows the number of nursing and midwifery students in receipt of different types of support and the associated cost.

Table 1: Nursing and Midwifery Student bursaries, grants and fees 2022-23

| Name of bursary or grant | Number of students in receipt | Amount of support provided (£m) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bursary | 12,670 | 107.7 |
| Initial expenses | 4,055 | 0.2 |
| Placement expenses | 3,660 | 3.3 |
| Dependants allowance | 1,785 | 5.8 |
| Childcare allowance | 1,150 | 2.3 |
| Single parents allowance | 1,720 | 3.3 |
| Disabled students allowance | 665 | 1.1 |
| Tuition fees | 11,385 | 20.7 |
| Ad hoc payments | 30 | <0.1 |
| Total | | 144.4 |

Source: [Scottish Student Awards Agency](#)

In 2022/23 there were 12,670 students in receipt of a student nursing bursary. The total spend on bursaries and other forms of support for student nurses and midwives was £144.4 million.

The [data shows](#) that more than half (52%) of students are over 25 years of age and 90% are female.

The student intake numbers for nursing and midwifery are controlled by the Scottish Government. For 2023/24, it was announced that there would be an intake target of 4,837². This was unchanged from previous

² This includes the 'three year' courses which are funded through a Scottish Government ring-fenced grant, Honours Nursing provision (referred to as 'four years honours'), and courses offered through the Open University in Scotland (OUIs).

years. In 2022, 3,950 nursing applicants and 275 midwifery applicants were accepted onto a preregistration course³.

Despite the increase in student places, applications to nursing in Scotland have fallen from 7,930 in 2022, to 6,450 in 2023. Midwifery has seen a similar decline in applicants, from 1,480 in 2022, to 1,050 in 2023⁴.

Data on [progression rates](#) shows that typically, between 20-30% of undergraduate nursing and midwifery students will not complete their course.

Scottish Government Policy

The Scottish Government published its [National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care](#) in March 2022.

This included a commitment to increase the number of training places for student nurses and midwives, and to maintain the student bursary.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not undertaken any recent work on this topic.

Kathleen Robson
SPICe Research
10 October 2023

³ [UCAS Undergraduate End of Cycle Data Resources 2022](#)

⁴ UCAS – [2023 Cycle applicant figures – 30 June Deadline](#)

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 22 November 2023

PE2039/A: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Nursing and midwifery programmes are regulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and delivered by higher education institutions. Each programme must adhere to the requirements stipulated by the NMC. As part of this, there is a requirement for every student to complete a minimum of 2300 hours of theoretical learning and 2300 hours of practice learning. Higher education institutions must ensure that this takes place prior to confirming to NMC that students are ready to enter the NMC register. This is a matter of protection of the public and adherence to regulatory requirements for the nursing profession UK-wide. It is therefore unfortunately not possible for student nurses to be employed as registrants before programme completion and entry to the NMC register.

The only exception to this was during the Covid-19 pandemic. The NMC introduced emergency standards which enabled second, third and final year students to be employed whilst undertaking placements. This unprecedented and unique step was taken to help support the NHS and ensure that final year students could graduate on time. It was only in place for a short period of time before Placements returned to supernumerary. This is a position on which the NMC continue to stand firm in order to ensure that students first and foremost continue to prioritise learning outcomes during placement.

The Scottish Government understands the financial challenges faced by all students, including nursing and midwifery students, and recognises that this has been exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis. However, it is important to note that eligible student nurses and midwives in Scotland receive the highest level of support across the United Kingdom. Our non-means tested, non-repayable bursary is £10,000 each year, and we provide free tuition for eligible pre-registration students in addition to funding for placement expenses,

uniforms, and disclosure and health checks to support students to complete their programme.

If a student is under additional stress and/or they believe that they are not being given supernumerary status, they should first discuss it with their practice supervisor, practice assessor and the unit manager. Students should also contact their personal tutor at their university, or the programme leader, and we would expect that this issue would be raised and followed up as part of the student feedback mechanism implemented as part of the Quality Management of Practice Learning Experience system, which is in place to help manage and quality assure student learning. Universities also have an escalation of concerns process, and students can use that process too.

Finally, registering with the Bank of healthcare workers at local NHS Boards can provide a variety of paid opportunities and we know that many nursing and midwifery students already work on the Bank. It does not provide a guarantee of work but allows NHS Boards to offer students employment as and/or when the need arises in their local area. Once a student is registered with the Bank some Boards may also offer students a part time fixed term healthcare support worker contract at a maximum of 15 hours per week. The opportunities which are available will vary between Boards, depending on their current and future requirements.

Nursing and midwifery students are the future of the profession, and the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that students are supported to complete their studies.

Chief Nursing Officer Directorate