

Date: Wednesday 26 February 2003
Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales
Title: Nurse Training Bursaries

Purpose

1. For the Health and Social Services Committee to note:

- The details of which Trusts had taken up the bursary scheme for nurse training, as requested as a result of discussions from the Health & Social Services Committee meeting on 4th December 2002. HSS-22-02 minutes refers.

Background on the NHS Wales Bursary Scheme

2. The NHS Wales Bursary Scheme provides a package of financial support for students that have been successful in gaining places on NHS funded health professional courses in Wales. Courses that lead to professional registration as an audiologist, chiropodist, dental hygienist, dental therapist, dietician, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, radiographer and speech and language therapist attract a means tested bursary. Those leading to registration as a nurse or direct entry midwife attract a non-means tested bursary. Since September 2002 medical and dental students have been eligible for means tested bursaries for the fifth year of study and beyond. The students who receive bursaries are not attached to or supported by a specific Trust.

- **Means tested bursary**

Eligible students are entitled to a basic grant for the standard 30-week academic year of £2,148, plus an additional amount for every week over and above 30 weeks of £69 per week. Students with dependants and students who are over 26 years of age at the start of their course may be entitled to further grants. The means tested bursary may have the level of assistance reduced depending on the assessed income of the students' parents or spouse. All students have their tuition fees paid in full. Means tested bursary holders are also eligible for a student loan of £1915 per academic year.

- **Non-means tested bursary**

Eligible students are entitled to a basic grant for the year of £5432. Students with dependants and students who are over 26 years of age at the start of their course may be entitled to further grants. All students have their tuition fees paid in full.

Position with regards to bursaries and the NHS Trusts in Wales

3. The Trusts in Wales **do not** receive bursary payments, what they do receive is funding from the Assembly to carry out projects in respect of nurse training:

4. The Assembly funds NHS Trusts in Wales, to run a Healthcare Support Worker Initiative scheme which allows nursing assistants to access pre-registration nursing courses by providing financial support to employers during their training. Funding is available up to a maximum of £15,000 per intake to cover or to contribute towards the salary of those staff nominated by the Trust to enrol on the scheme. There are two intakes each year, one in March and the other in September. Bursaries are not paid to students on this scheme. Funding from the Assembly goes directly to Trusts and enables them to continue to pay the salary of their support worker for the duration of their training. However these students are entitled to the additional support available to Project 2000 students, notably reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs on clinical placements. All Trust's in Wales are fully utilising thier funding.

Students are also entitled to a book allowance which is currently £55 pounds per person. This Healthcare Support Worker Initiative has also recently been set up as a part time pilot scheme for employers working in conjunction with the University of Wales Bangor and the University of Glamorgan to offer better opportunities for students entering part time nurse training course. Healthcare Support Workers are therefore able to train on a part-time basis and maintain their substantive role in the balance of their time.

5. Secondly, the Assembly working along side NHS employers has also invested in 'Return to Practice' courses for Nurses, and Midwives. This course offers the opportunity for professional nurses and midwives whose registration has lapsed due to at least a five year career break to undertake refresher training courses to enable them to update their skills and to ensure they are fit to practice prior to regaining entry to the Professional register. The Assembly has so far provided £1,000 of financial support to each returner whilst retraining. Assistance with childcare support is also available where necessary. At least 345 nurses (including some midwives) have successfully completed the course, which has enabled them to return to the workforce as a result.

Considerations / Summary

6. Nurse training numbers have increase significantly over the past three years. In 1999/00 there were 2,600 nurses training in Wales. By 2002/03 the number in training has increased to 3,500, a rise of 35%. For the academic year 2003/04 the Assembly will commission 1,367 new nurse training places.

7. The attrition rate for students is now recorded at 3.5% per annum, this has dramatically decreased from previous recorded figures which was 6.1%. Some of the reasons given why students leave training include financial hardship and difficulties with child care arrangements. The Recruitment and Retention – A Strategy for NHS Wales highlighted the plans the Assembly has put in place to address better child care arrangements.

8. In September 2001, the bursary available for student nurses, midwives and other health professionals was increased by 10.4%. This was by far the largest increase to NHS students in recent years. In September 2002, students bursary was increased by a further 2.4%. This financial investment will ultimately encourage more students to apply for training courses and will also ensure that more students who start courses will complete them.

9. The delivery of high quality healthcare requires effective teamwork. In order to encourage this the Welsh Assembly Government is working with educational advisors and NHS employers to develop elements of inter-professional learning and common core training. The Assembly is committed to ensuring that enough professionals are being trained to satisfy the staffing needs identified in the workforce plans. Expansion of capacity in the higher education institutions and clinical placements will continue to be a priority along with initiatives to widen access and provide alternative routes to gaining professional qualifications.

Compliance

10. The Directions are given in exercise of the powers conferred by section 40 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and sections 2(b) & 17 (1) of the 1977 NHS Act refer. This power was transferred to the National Assembly of Wales under article 2 of Schedule 1 to the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999. The power has been subsequently delegated to the Minister for Health and Social Services.

Financial Implications

11. There are no additional financial implications for the Welsh Assembly Government as a result of this paper. NHS Finance Division (DJS319) has noted that there are no additional financial implications for the Assembly.

Cross-cutting themes

- 12.i) Implementation of reforms arising from the NHS Plan for Wales;
- ii) Implementation of ‘Realising the Potential’ a Strategic Framework for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in Wales;
- iii) Implementation of ‘Recruitment and Retention – A strategy for NHSWales’;
- iv) Emerging developments in inter and multi professional education and training;

v) UK wide changes in quality assuring professional education and training.

Action for Subject Committee

13. The Health & Social Services Committee are asked to note the contents of this paper.

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