



Royal College
of Nursing

Department of Health consultation on the move to a loan and tuition fees system for nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals:

Fiona Smith

About the Department of Health consultation

- ◆ Consultation on plans to implement loans and tuition fee for nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students in England from August 2017.
www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changing-how-healthcare-education-is-funded
- ◆ Closes on 30 June 2016, running for 12 weeks
- ◆ Proposals build on CSR announcement – RCN was not consulted
- ◆ Consults on the design of the change and not the principle itself
- ◆ Contains a brief equality assessment and an economic impact assessment

Equality Analysis (Consultation stage)

Reforming healthcare education funding: creating a sustainable future workforce

About the Government's consultation proposals

- ◆ From 1 August 2017 all new nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students in England will receive their funding and financial support through loans provided by the Student Loans Company England, rather than through the current NHS Bursary Scheme.
- ◆ Alongside this, from 2017 new students will no longer have their course fees paid for but will be liable for tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year, and eligible for student loans to cover the cost of these fees.
- ◆ Under the proposals future nursing students will incur debts of up to £60,000 for a three year degree.
- ◆ The Government believes this will provide up to 10,000 additional nursing and other health professional training places this Parliament
- ◆ Although the proposals are for England only, the RCN believes that this change will have implications for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Further details about the Government's proposals

Postgrad and second degrees

- ◆ Pre-registration postgraduates will get a non means tested loan of up to £10,000 for to be used towards living costs and fees. Re-payments run concurrently with any other student loans they have.
- ◆ Students applying for a second degree in pre-registration nursing will have access to a second student loan, repayments commencing when first student loan is paid off.

Widening participation

- ◆ The Government claim that extra finance of up to 25% more than bursary in living costs will contribute towards widening participation.
- ◆ Students studying nursing, midwifery and allied health professions will be brought within the system of “access agreements”

Further details (continued)

Childcare

Government claim that the current Business, Innovation and Skills non repayable allowances for childcare and dependants are generally higher than those under the current NHS bursary, and that there **is not** a case for providing additional financial support alongside this.

Maternity/paternity

Payments for maternity and paternity leave will not be provided. Support for the first 60 days maternity and paternity leave will be discretionary.

Further details (continued)

Placements

- ◆ HEE will retain the responsibility for commissioning and funding the minimum numbers of clinical placements, assessed as required, to produce sufficient health care graduates.

Placement expenses

- ◆ Students will be required to contribute an excess (of around £300) towards their placement travel costs before costs are reimbursed.

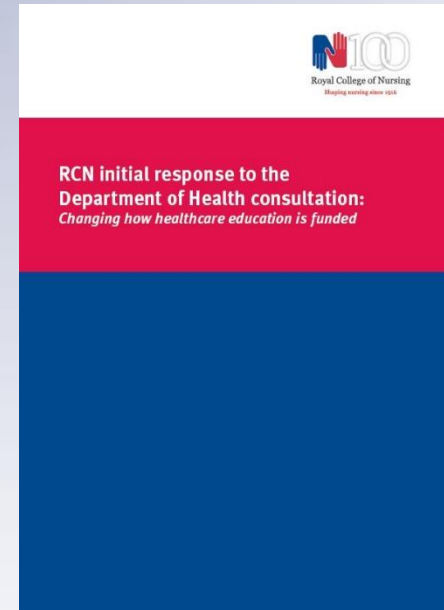
RCN work to date includes:

- ◆ Roundtable discussion between Ben Gummer and RCN student members (post announcement in November 2015 spending review)
- ◆ The RCN encouraged members to ask their MPs to sign an Early Day Motion on student bursaries
- ◆ The RCN signatory to a joint staff side and RCN own submission to the Public Accounts Committee
- ◆ RCN supporting members to attend lobby of Parliament on 25 May
- ◆ Initial RCN position statement released and available on RCN website
- ◆ Survey to all members in England now closed

RCN position

The RCN is deeply concerned that:

- ◆ The Government's proposals are '**high risk**'
- ◆ There is potential for the proposed changes to impact adversely on the future education and **supply of nursing**.
- ◆ The Government's impact assessment and equality assessment has **not fully addressed all the potential impacts** of the proposals. Some key risks are lacking in a detailed assessment and others are missing altogether.
- ◆ There are significant risks associated with the current consultation proposals. These risks have the potential to detrimentally impact on **patient care** and the provision of comprehensive health services.



The RCN is deeply concerned that:

- ◆ The prospect of starting a career with a large debt will **deter mature students** from joining the profession. There has been little assessment of the risks of **unintended discrimination**, e.g. re: age, gender, religion, BME and socio-economic groups.
- ◆ The introduction of **tuition fees will have a far greater impact** financially on nursing students.

The RCN believe that:

- ◆ Anything that makes people worse off or deters them from becoming nurses, would be a **big loss to our society and could threaten patient care**.
- ◆ These changes should be **immediately halted** until a suitable model of funding is evidenced and agreed upon.

Working with government to find solutions

In the absence of a sufficient evidence base for this decision, the RCN will be engaging with our members to undertake a more comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts and risks of the proposed changes. We will also seek to identify alternative funding approaches that will deliver a sustainable nursing workforce over the long-term.

What are your views?

These plans will affect the whole nursing workforce.

Please share your views with us so we can make our response to the Government as strong as possible.

Please send us comments from your discussion with details of your meeting date, participants and key comments:

policycontacts@rcn.org.uk

Please tell your colleagues to get in touch, and keep checking the RCN website for further updates

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts/student-bursaries>