



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to Health Education Funding Reform (NHS Tuition Fees & Bursaries) – March 2017

Thank you for contacting me about changes to the health education system.

I believe that nurses, midwives and allied health professionals (AHPs) are vital to our valued NHS and so everybody with the qualifications and commitment to undertake these degrees should have the chance to do so. The current system prevents this as the cost of training nurses, midwives and AHPs is largely borne by the NHS. In effect there has been an artificial cap on the numbers in training, limited to only those numbers needed as a minimum to meet NHS workforce requirements in line with Health Education England's annual workforce plan.

These limits currently prevent two in every three people who want to be a nurse from doing so. The Government is committed to increasing the number of training places for home-grown nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, with those in training getting around 25 per cent more financial support while they study. This is a huge advantage to the NHS, which has had to rely on expensive agency nurses and staff from overseas in order to compensate for a lack of UK-trained professionals.

In order to deliver more nurses and health professionals for the NHS, a better funding system for health students and a more sustainable model for universities, it is necessary to move health students' grants and bursaries onto the standard student support system – in line with all other degrees. This will not affect existing students. This change will be introduced for new students only from August 2017.

The Government recognises that nursing students in particular often have unique circumstances. Following a consultation on these reforms, the Government will be providing extra funding to help cover additional expenses like travel and more support for students with children. Ministers will work with the Royal College of Nursing, hospitals and other partners in taking this forward.

These changes will also create up to 10,000 more training places by the end of this Parliament and the Government is also running a campaign to get experienced nurses back to work.

Student contributions to university costs have changed on three previous occasions, and every time there has been an immediate dip in application rates followed by a steady rise. I know that Ministers are confident nursing courses will follow a similar trend and are certain we will have all the student nurses the NHS needs by September. I understand that the Government will work with the university sector to ensure that applicants are aware of the benefits on offer in undertaking a nursing degree course.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Whittaker MP