

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

Petitioner written submission, 16 October 2024

My name is Amylee Dodds, and I am the petitioner for PE2039, which calls for fair pay for student nurses while on placement. This petition seeks to address the financial challenges and inequities faced by student nurses who, despite working full-time hours in demanding healthcare environments, receive no financial compensation.

Information about the petition

The financial burden on student nurses is a significant issue. Based on responses from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), and the Scottish Government, it is evident that financial concerns are widespread. The RCN highlighted that 99% of respondents expressed some level of financial concern. Additionally, 74% reported that these concerns had a high or very high impact on their mental health, while 48% stated that it affected their physical health.

While the Chief Nursing Directorate mentioned the availability of the nursing bank as a form of financial support, this option is not entirely sufficient. NHS Lothian does provide opportunities for students to work through the staff bank; however, balancing placement requirements, university deadlines, and additional work hours is challenging. Student nurses often work 37.5 hours a week on placement, have essays and clinical skills days to attend, and are only allowed to work up to 15 hours per week on the nursing bank. This demanding schedule leaves little room for physical and mental wellbeing, causes social isolation from friends and family, and often results in students falling behind academically.

Challenges and solutions

The current structure creates barriers for students to maintain their health and academic performance. Realistic solutions include increasing the student nursing bursary to reflect the rising cost of living or introducing a system where student nurses are paid a minimum wage or a Band 2 salary during placements. Placements typically range from 6 to 8 weeks, with the management placement extending to 14 weeks. Paying student nurses during these periods would not only provide financial relief but also incentivise students to continue their training without the added stress of financial instability.

Feasibility and realism of the petition

Implementing fair pay for student nurses is both realistic and achievable. In other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, student nurses receive payment during placements, and similar models could be adopted in Scotland. Additionally, supporting student nurses financially aligns with Scotland's commitment to improving healthcare services and retaining skilled professionals. Investing in the wellbeing of

student nurses will lead to a more robust and motivated workforce, ultimately benefiting the healthcare system as a whole.

Related work and initiatives

There are ongoing discussions within nursing unions and student associations advocating for better financial support for student nurses. The RCN and other organisations have consistently highlighted the need for financial compensation to address the rising cost of living and the pressures faced by student nurses. This petition is a call to action for the Scottish Government to take concrete steps to support the future of nursing in Scotland.