

## **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 students<sup>1</sup>. 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

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.

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

**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)
<b>Bursary</b>	12,670	107.7
<b>Initial expenses</b>	4,055	0.2
<b>Placement expenses</b>	3,660	3.3
<b>Dependants allowance</b>	1,785	5.8
<b>Childcare allowance</b>	1,150	2.3
<b>Single parents allowance</b>	1,720	3.3
<b>Disabled students allowance</b>	665	1.1
<b>Tuition fees</b>	11,385	20.7
<b>Ad hoc payments</b>	30	<0.1
<b>Total</b>		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 show](#) 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 4,837<sup>2</sup>. This was unchanged from previous years. In 2022, 3,950 nursing applicants and 275 midwifery applicants were accepted onto a preregistration course<sup>3</sup>.

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 2023<sup>4</sup>.

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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> [UCAS Undergraduate End of Cycle Data Resources 2022](#)

<sup>4</sup> UCAS – [2023 Cycle applicant figures – 30 June Deadline](#)

## **Scottish Parliament Action**

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

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