

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 18 June 2025
11th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2039: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Introduction

Petitioner Amy Lee

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2039>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 30 October 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 22 November 2023](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3,121 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
June 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2039: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Petitioner

Amy Lee

Date Lodged

3 August 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours.

Previous action

Wrote to Ash Regan MSP. A member of her staff got back to me and provided me with the links to make my own petition.

Background information

As a student nurse, I feel we should get paid while on placement. We are supposed to be there for the learning experience to complete our electronic Practice Assessment Documents) and be supernumerary. However, during my last 3 placements I have been used as a spare member of staff, covering either for staff off sick or for staff not attending bank and agency shifts.

I was a clinical support worker before becoming a student nurse, taking a £1000 pay cut to better myself and study.

NHS paid student nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic, so I don't know why this can't continue. The longest placement we do is three months and they already use us in their working numbers which should not be the case. Doing a placement while also writing essays and preparing for exams is not an ideal situation to be in. This adds up to a 50+ hour week, and can lead to burnout, financial difficulties and poor mental health.

We get a bursary but this doesn't even cover some people's mortgages. Being paid for placement work would help to reduce the number of people dropping out due to financial difficulties.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2039 on 30 October 2024

The Convener: The next continued petition, PE2039, which was lodged by Amy Lee, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to pay student nurses for their placement hours. We last considered this petition at our meeting on 20 December 2023, when we agreed to write to the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Royal College of Nursing and the National Union of Students. The Royal College of Nursing's response emphasises the importance of student nurses having supernumerary status, as that means that they must not be counted as part of the workforce that is required to provide patient care. The submission states that, for that reason, the RCN does not support students being paid while on clinical placement.

In a 2022 RCN members survey, 46 per cent of respondents said that, on their last shift, nursing students were being counted as staff in terms of the numbers required to provide patient care, and the submission states that, although RCN Scotland does not support student nurses being paid while on clinical placement, it is clear that the Scottish Government must ensure that nursing students have appropriate financial support to allow them to prioritise their education, cope with the rising cost of living and complete their studies without falling into financial hardship.

The RCN's report on nursing student finance said that 66 per cent of respondents had considered dropping out of their course due to financial concerns, and it recommended that "Scottish government must implement a cost-of-living increase to the nursing student bursary and associated allowances, and establish a regular review to ensure the bursary increases in line with the cost of living."

Do colleagues have any suggestions for action?

David Torrance: The committee could write to the Scottish Government to highlight the Royal College of Nursing's report on nursing student finance and ask what consideration it has given to the report's recommendations.

The Convener: Is the committee content to do as Mr Torrance suggests?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government written submission, 19 May 2025

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

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 2024 inviting the Scottish Government to comment on the recommendations within the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) report [Nursing Student Finance: the true costs of becoming a nurse](#). Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in the response to your letter, this was due to staff absences.

The Scottish Government was grateful for the research conducted by the RCN and the findings in the report. Following the publication of the report, the former Chief Nursing Officer, Alex McMahon, met with students at an RCN roundtable event in September 2023. The roundtable discussion allowed further conversation around the themes within the recommendations.

Following the roundtable in September 2023 and a Royal College of Midwives (RCM) student roundtable in May 2024, the Scottish Government created a short-life working group comprising representatives from the Scottish Government, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and higher education institutes (HEIs) to review the clinical placement expenses guidance to respond to student concerns and RCN recommendations.

The group concluded its review and revised guidance was finalised on 1 July 2024. This work ensured that students are refunded as quickly as possible and provided students with greater clarity and flexibility on issues such as use of the young persons' free bus travel, when authority may be granted to use their own car and claiming advance payments or interim payments during long placements. Students may also claim reasonable costs for accommodation if required while on placement.

A focus of the RCN recommendations is ensuring that student nurses have a fair financial support package throughout their studies. The Scottish Government recognises the financial challenges faced by all students, including nursing students, and are aware that the current cost of living crisis is causing an impact for many households.

Following the RCN and RCM student finance reports and the insight from students at the RCN and RCM roundtable events, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care committed to carrying out a review of the financial support package for nursing, midwifery and paramedicine students. The current funding package is multifaceted and as such the review will consider what is currently in place and also any opportunities to create additional financial support mechanisms, such as student loans.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care wrote to stakeholders on 17 September 2024 to provide an update on the review of the package of financial support and to detail the scope of the review.

In addition to this, throughout March and April of this year, the Scottish Government hosted two engagement sessions with stakeholders and five sessions with students to provide an update on the review and to capture their views.

Scottish Government officials will use the broad themes raised at these sessions to survey the wider student body to ensure as many students as possible have the opportunity to share their views.

Finally, the RCN report also recommends a review of the processes in place to allow students to register with their local NHS Board bank. As recognised in the report, this is a matter for NHS health boards as health boards are independent institutions, separate from the Scottish Government, and are responsible for their own recruitment. It may be helpful to highlight that NHS Board Executive Nurse Directors have been made aware of the reported difficulties in students accessing bank work.

The Scottish Government is extremely grateful to our highly skilled nursing and midwifery students for their extraordinary hard work, dedication, skills and commitment. Scottish Government officials will continue to engage with stakeholders and students throughout the financial support review to ensure Ministers are able to consider options that are reflective of the needs of the diverse range of nursing students.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Chief Nursing Officer Directorate