



Royal College of Nursing
Shaping nursing since 1916

Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G 0RN

Janet Davies
Chief Executive & General Secretary

17 June 2016

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

As the leaders of professional organisations, health unions, patient organisations and Royal Colleges, we are calling on you to take immediate action to halt the Government proposals to reform student funding for nursing, midwifery and allied health professions (AHPs).

The Government's proposals on student funding for nursing, midwifery and AHPs are an untested gamble with the future of the workforce that have not been properly risk assessed. There is little explanation or consultation about what impact these funding changes will have on those who need to train for more advanced or specialist roles, such as health visitors or district nurses, at a time when their expertise is needed by patients more than ever.

The plans to switch to a system of loans threatens to reduce the supply of future nurses, midwives and AHPs at a time when patient demand is rising. While loans and tuition fees exist within other parts of higher education, it is important to recognise that those changes occurred after more than a decade of phased introduction. The impact will be worse in health because there are no transition arrangements. There is no safety net for the NHS, these proposals will have a detrimental effect on the current and future NHS workforce, and also on the quality of patient care and safety provided in England.

We are deeply concerned that these plans could disproportionately affect more mature students, women, students with children and those who already have a degree, people who have always made up an important part of the NHS workforce. Many of these people will be unwilling or unable to take on even more debt, and their vital contribution will be lost.

Under these plans, the Government has failed to allocate any funding for extra clinical placements and mentors, vital in giving students real, practical experience.

Royal College of Nursing
of the United Kingdom
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
Telephone +44 (0) 20 74093333
RCN Direct 0345 772 6100
www.rcn.org.uk

Patron
Her Majesty the Queen
President
Cecilia Anim RGN, DPSN
Chief Executive & General Secretary
Janet Davies BSc (Hons), MBA, RGN, RMN, FRCN

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Healthcare students can spend up to 50 per cent of their studies in clinical settings, so the quality of their education experience could be significantly affected.

These plans are a short-sighted attempt to solve a long-term and complicated problem. They have not been properly risk assessed, and continuing with them as they stand would be nothing short of reckless.

We urge you to reconsider these plans and to meet with us to hear our concerns directly. We would also be keen to discuss the ways in which we can work together to create a health care workforce that is well motivated and sustainable for the years to come.

Yours sincerely,

E. Janet Davies
Chief Executive and General Secretary
Royal College of Nursing

Julie Bliss
Chair
Association of District Nurse
Educators

Peter Ward
Chief Executive Officer
British Dental Association

Paddy Tabor MVO
Chief Executive
British Kidney Patient Association

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Dr Mark Porter
Council Chair
British Medical Association

Dr Jill Firth
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Dr Theresa Shaw
Chief Executive
Foundation of Nursing Studies

Dr Cheryll Adams
Executive Director
Institute of Health Visiting

Megan Dunn
National President
National Union of Students

Arlene Wilkie
Chief Executive
Neurological Alliance

Steve Ford
Chief Executive
Parkinson's UK

Katherine Murphy
Chief Executive
Patients Association

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Chief Executive Office
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Chief Executive
The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists/The College of Podiatry

Dave Prentis
General Secretary
UNISON

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Gail Cartmail
Assistant General Secretary
Unite

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*The RCN is a Royal College set up by Royal Charter and a Special Register Trade Union
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