



Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health & Social Care
39 Victoria St
London SW1H 0EU

6 May 2020

Dear Secretary of State

Student finance

We know that you would agree with us, as the four unions representing the majority of nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students, that the way in which so many of them have stepped up to offer their skills and knowledge to assist with the response to the pandemic is a source of great pride. For those in the earlier stages of their professional education, they have adapted to the significant disruption with courage and a continuing commitment to their future careers.

Our opposition to the introduction of tuition fees for nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students in England is well-documented and our concerns, in terms of the exacerbation of nursing shortfalls and financial hardship, have been borne out. However, the current crisis – and the impact on those students, whether joining the workforce or continuing with their education – has placed the unfairness of this policy into even starker focus.

It is time to recognise the value and commitment of our nursing, midwifery, and allied healthcare students. We are therefore asking you to:

- reimburse tuition fees or forgive current debt for all current nursing, midwifery, and allied healthcare students;
- abolish student-funded tuition fees for all nursing, midwifery, and allied healthcare students starting in 2020/21 and beyond, in recognition that they will be supporting vital public services; and
- introduce universal, living maintenance grants that reflect actual student need.

Thousands of healthcare students have joined the NHS and social care frontline since this pandemic began, eager to support their qualified colleagues. We ask that you acknowledge their selfless service, not only with words, but in a tangible and quantifiable way.

Yours sincerely

Gill Walton
General Secretary
Royal College of Midwives

Dave Prentis
General Secretary
UNISON

Dame Donna Kinnair
General Secretary
Royal College of Nursing

Eva Crossan Jory
Vice-President Welfare
National Union of Students

cc Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education