

Evan Durward

**Consultation Response – Supporting a Smarter Scotland**Supporting a Smarter Scotland: A Consultation on Supporting Learners in Higher Education

NHS Education for Scotland is pleased to participate in this consultation. As a special Health Board, NES has specific responsibilities for supporting the workforce in healthcare in terms of the delivery of effective and safe healthcare. We also have additional responsibilities associated with supporting workforce planning and in identifying the workforce needs in specific professional areas.

As an organisation we fully welcome the detailed analysis set out in relation to the specific options regarding the funding for students undertaking courses and programmes within Higher Education. In submitting our responses to this consultation we have considered it appropriate to concentrate on the questions that relate to NES specifically.

General Comments

The NHS in Scotland is a major employer of graduates from Higher and Further Education and the ongoing supply of appropriately qualified staff to professional and occupational groups within the Health Service is a major concern and a priority area in terms of the continuity of services. The funding models in place for the support of students are likely to impact on the eventual uptake of employment by the Health Service. We would request therefore that in identifying the preferred method of providing student support that consideration be given to the range of courses supported by HE and FE that are essential for the sustainability of the health service workforce.

Specific responses

Our responses to the questions set are confined to the issues regarding support for second HE qualifications and student travel expenses.

Support for second HE qualifications

A number of initiatives currently in place to support the workforce development in Scotland are dependant upon graduates undertaking second degrees that make them eligible to take up specialist roles within the Health Service. Examples include graduate entry into the dental profession, the Anaesthetic Assistant Programme and Masters level programmes leading to entry into physiotherapy and occupational therapy. In resolving this issue we would request that priority funding should be retained to support graduates wishing to take up these important career options requiring second degree level qualification. As an organisation we would be able to provide advice on a regular basis with regard to the identification of priority groups that would require support for entry into the Health Service workforce. We are therefore not in agreement with the proposal that you should consider removing student loan support for second degrees. We would qualify this by stating that there is a need to be highly selective in the provision of second degree support and that there is a need to identify groups of strategic importance that require support to facilitate entry into the Health Service in Scotland workforce.

Travel Expenses

We would wish to see the travel expenses maintained as a separate claim based fund.

As a matter of national priority it is now essential that the education of all pre-registration healthcare students includes the opportunity to work within remote and rural and isolated

work situations. We now have considerable evidence that by providing students with the opportunity to work in these settings that our recruitment to these areas is improved and as a result the quality of care maintained. We consider therefore that the claiming of expenses to facilitate this important aspect of the learning experience should be retained as a separate process and accessed on a needs only basis. We would therefore support the removal of regular day to day travelling expenses in order to provide selective support for students attending educational placements in remote and rural as well as isolated locations.

### Final Comments

As stated previously, we have confined our responses to those questions that impact directly on the healthcare workforce and its development and sustainability in Scotland.

Submitted on behalf of NHS Education for Scotland by Professor Brian Durward, Director for Educational Development