

May 2016

UNISON activist briefing

Everything you need to know about the mass lobby on 25 May

The Government's plans to scrap NHS bursaries will leave student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals with over £52,000 worth of debt. The fear of debt will discourage many people from becoming healthcare professionals, exacerbating the current recruitment crisis. This will have disastrous repercussions for patient safety.

We're so glad you're going to be part of the lobby of Parliament on 25 May. This is the best opportunity we have to change the minds of hostile MPs, and ensure friendly ones continue to oppose the scrapping of NHS bursaries actively. At the end of this document are some topics you could discuss with your MP.

There will be lots of people there from different unions, so it will be an exciting day and will show MPs that we really care about this, but it may also mean some waiting around a bit, so please be prepared for that.

Please make sure you read the section of this guide called 'talking to your MP' before you get to the meeting. This is your chance to show your MP that scrapping NHS bursaries will have a really detrimental impact on everyone who lives in their constituency, so we have provided some key bits of information that we think could persuade or challenge Conservative MPs.

In this guide:

- Before the day
- On the day
- Talking to your MP

Before the day

Try to arrange a meeting with your MP before the day. We have set up an email template you can use, just by putting in your postcode and a few details, here: <http://www.e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1978&ea.campaign.id=50676&ea.tracking.id=web>

You can also write to them by post if you would prefer, at the House of Commons. Put your post code in the box on this website: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/> to find out their name if you don't know it, then send it to House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA.

You can also phone via the House of Commons switchboard on 020 7219 3000 to speak to your MPs office. All MPs have already received a letter about the lobby, so should be aware of the event.

If you do not hear back from your MP about the meeting you can still queue up and try to arrange an appointment (there is further information on how to do this below). And please do still come along to the rally if you are able to. There will be some exciting speakers and the more people at the rally the stronger our message.

If you hear back and your MP is not able to meet you, please try to meet them in your constituency.

Please bear in mind that no banners, posters, or T shirts with slogans on are allowed in the Houses of Parliament, so sadly please don't wear any of your fashionable UNISON t shirts.

On the day

- Registration for the lobby will be open from 10am onwards at Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH, which is a short distance from parliament (map here: <https://www.c-h-w.com/contact/location/>).
- Briefings to help members have effective meetings with their MPs on the cuts to bursaries will take place throughout the day in Central Hall Westminster.
- Stewards will be on hand to direct members from Central Hall Westminster to parliament, with attendees entering through the Cromwell Green entrance (map here: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/facilities/maps/colmap.pdf>).
- Inside parliament, members can base themselves in Committee Room 10, where briefings will also be available.
- A rally with a range of speakers from student campaigners to representatives of trade unions will take place in the Central Hall Westminster from 15.00 until 16.30.

Time	What's happening	Location
10.00 – 15.00	Registration for lobby attendees. Briefings for students meeting their MPs.	Central Hall Westminster
11.15 – 14.45	Base inside parliament for students meeting MPs. Opportunity for further briefings.	Committee Room 10, parliament
15.00 – 16.30	Rally with a range of speakers including student campaigners and representatives from all participating trade unions.	Central Hall Westminster

When you get inside Parliament

You will have to go through 'airport type' security to gain access to Parliament - on a busy day this can take at least 15 minutes.

Once inside the building, all lobbyists will be directed by the House of Commons' police and staff to the Central Lobby where you can ask to see your MP. This is known as the 'Green Card' system.

1. Lobbyists will be directed to the Central Lobby. There is a desk to the left of the entrance to the Lobby staffed by officials from the Serjeant-at-Arms Office.

2. Go to the desk and ask for a 'green card'. Enter your name and address and the purpose of your visit as "to highlight concerns about scrapping NHS bursaries." You should say on the green card that, if it is not possible to meet on the day of the lobby, you would like to meet them in the constituency. This is important because if you do not meet with your MP, the card is then sent on to the MP's office.
3. Then you have to wait for your MP in Central Lobby. The desk staff will take the card and attendants will then seek the MP in the Chamber and other committee rooms.
4. If your MP has been found and has arrived your name will be called out. If you do not know what your MP looks like, you might have to listen out for your name. You may find that Central Lobby can be quite noisy and crowded.
5. Your MP may have somewhere in mind for your discussion. If not, politely suggest that if you leave the Central Lobby it will allow other lobbyists in to see other MPs and will make the conversation more comfortable (there are a list of possible rooms below).

If MPs do not appear within half an hour or so of the green card going in, it is unlikely that they will come at all. Sometimes they will send their staff on their behalf if they are caught up in other meetings. You must decide how long you can wait but remember that the longer you stay the less likelihood there is of colleagues further back in the queue being able to enter and submit their green cards. For every lobbyist that leaves, the police will allow another one into Central Lobby.

Disabled access

If you are disabled, telephone the Serjeant-at-Arms' office at the House of Commons, who will advise you procedures for entering the building (phone 0207 219 3000 and ask the switchboard officer to put you through to the Serjeant's office), the Serjeant's office do allow some parking where it is required by disabled people, but individuals will need to verify this with the office. It is usual for one of your MPs' staff to accompany you once you enter the building. This needs to be arranged in advance.

Talking to your MP

Remember your MP is paid for by your taxes, they are accountable to you and you are well within your rights to ask them any questions (politely!).

If your MP is a Conservative this is a real chance to make them realise the negative impact of scrapping NHS bursaries. If they are not Conservative they are likely to be supportive of us but you can tell them about these issues and ask them to talk to Conservative MPs that they know.

The Government's plans to scrap NHS bursaries will leave student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals with over £52,000 worth of debt. You know that the fear of debt will discourage many people from becoming healthcare professionals, exacerbating the current recruitment crisis. This will have disastrous repercussions for patient safety.

In talking about this proposal the Government has focused on how the changes will increase training places – a claim which we dispute – so your MP may not realise all the other negative consequences scrapping NHS bursaries will have on workforce planning and patient safety. This is your chance to tell them that scrapping NHS bursaries will impact the people they have been elected to represent, the people who they need to vote for them in 2020 if they want to keep their job!

Ask your MP to push for the withdrawal of the withdrawing the present consultation process on the implementation of the government's proposals and to replace it with an open consultation with all interested parties about the way forward, but one which can't involve huge debts for students and no extra income for Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

Below are some issues we suggest you raise with your MP.

Students and graduates will be worse off

While students may receive more funding during their studies, students and graduates will be financially worse off in the longer term because their total debt will have increased significantly making it harder for them to meet the ever growing cost of living.

- Following the removal of the NHS Bursary and their replacement with repayable loans, London Economics say a representative student undertaking a full-time degree in nursing professions will see their total debt (comprising maintenance and tuition fee loans) increase from approximately £6,930 to approximately £48,788 on graduation.
- While a newly qualified nurse may only repay £90 in the first year, this figure will increase as they go up the Agenda for Change pay points. The scrapping of NHS bursaries will equate to a pay cut of over £900 per annum (or 3%) for a nurse on a mean average salary (£31,080) – the amount a nurse will earn per annum for almost 75% of the repayment period.
- The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) *Intentions after Graduation Survey 2014* showed that when looking at the undergraduates who intended to go into postgraduate study, those who defined as BME, disabled and mature were less likely to actually enrol in such study. Fear of debt and other financial considerations were cited as the principal reasons individuals were deterred from study in the previous year's research on this topic.
- Moving to a debt-only model will likely increase the extent that healthcare students work part-time and the hours they work, as they will seek to reduce their exposure to debt. Working over 16 hours per week is associated with poorer attainment, and this will be all the more acute given the intensity of healthcare courses.
- Increasing student debt has been shown to delay the chances of a graduate buying their own home. Scrapping NHS bursaries will throw graduates' home ownership plans into jeopardy.

Fewer healthcare professionals, not more

Far from encouraging 10,000 additional training places by 2020, cutting NHS bursaries will discourage many people from becoming a nurse, midwife or allied health professional because of the fear of debt.

- According to London Economics, the 71% increased costs that students and graduates will bear will result in the nursing, midwifery and allied health professions being less attractive, and will in all likelihood reduce education participation by 6-7% - equivalent to more than 2,000 students in the first year.
- The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts said in its report *Managing the supply of NHS clinical staff in England* that 'the changes could have a negative impact on both the overall number of applicants and on certain groups, such as mature students or those with children'.
- The NHS Pay Review Body in its 29th report said that 'the removal of bursaries for student nurses could also have a disruptive impact on supply or the quality of supply' and that 'the removal of the incentive of the bursary could have an unsettling effect on the number and quality of applications for nursing training places'.

Patient safety will be put at risk

The expected decline in numbers entering nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions in higher education will exacerbate the current recruitment crisis in the health and social care sector putting patient safety at risk.

- Scrapping NHS bursaries will have a negative impact on the health and social care sector's capacity to meet demand. If nursing numbers are reduced, this will result in beds being closed in hospitals. For example, Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was forced into significant bed closures after CQC inspectors raised concerns about staff ratios in January 2016.
- With fewer newly qualified nurses, the existing health professionals will be expected to work longer hours and take on more patients in order to do more with less. This is likely to lead to an increase in the occurrence of 'never events' (i.e. serious incidents that are wholly preventable). More 'never events' will mean more legal claims made against the NHS for clinical negligence.

Higher Education Institutes will be worse off

The government's proposal states that it will ensure sustainable funding for universities. However, because of the decline in student numbers and the need to finance access bursaries under the Office for Fair Access guidance, universities will be worse off financially.

- London Economics found that HEI will be worse off by approximately £57-£77 million per cohort. Approximately half of this decline will be as a result of the decline in student numbers. However, there will also be a reduction in HEI revenues as a result of the fact that a proportion of any tuition fee received by HEIs (approximately 15% above £6,000) will now be 'handed back' to students via the Access agreements that

HEIs sign with the Office for Fair Access.

- If fees and funding support is entirely portable, Higher Education Institutions' income streams are likely to be substantially more volatile in the future. Some universities may decide to stop running some health related courses altogether if they are unsustainable.

No cost savings to the Exchequer

Contrary to the government's claim that scrapping NHS bursaries will save the Treasury money, there will be no cost savings to the Exchequer because most nurses will not earn enough to repay the entire loan and the decline in numbers entering nursing will increase Agency staffing costs.

- Given the fundamentally different characteristics of both students and graduate earnings of nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, London Economics say the cost savings to the Exchequer are more likely to be approximately £88 million per cohort than the £534 million stated by the government.
- However, combining the expected decline in numbers entering nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions in higher education with increased Agency staffing costs to cover staffing shortfalls, London Economics estimated that there will be an additional £100.3 million cost incurred by Trusts per cohort – wiping out any potential cost savings.

Reporting back

Please do email j.randall@unison.co.uk to let us know how your meeting went, it's really useful to know if there were certain aspects of the government's proposal to scrap NHS bursaries that your MP is concerned about.