

New nurses on frontline of coronavirus battle face up to £62,000 of debt



Green Party

24 March 2020

New nurses and midwives will be stepping on to the frontline of the coronavirus crisis with up to £62,000 of debt following the scrapping of the NHS bursary, Green Party peer Natalie Bennett has highlighted in a speech in the House of Lords today.

Bennett, a former leader of the Green Party and peer since October 2019, has now urged the government to provide exceptional grants of £15,000 to the nurses and midwives who are finishing their course this year after missing out on the bursary which was scrapped in 2017.

According to government figures, the change will have seen a student nurse or midwife take on debts worth up to £61,812 in tuition fee loans and maintenance loans for living costs.[1]

Bennett said:

“Most of the nurses and midwives who are finishing their courses early and stepping in now to provide crucial services in this crisis belong to the cohort exceptionally hit by debt.

“They carry tuition debts of nearly £28,000 and many will have had to take out loans for living costs, up to £34,000 for those living in London.

“I ask, no I beg the government to recognise these women and men who will be risking their lives for us in the weeks and months ahead and at a minimum to make an exceptional grant of £15,000 each to bring them into the same position as new students getting grants of £5,000 a year.”

In December, the government announced a new grant of £5,000 a year for new nursing and midwifery students from September 2020. [2]

Bennett asked the government in a written question before the Coronavirus epidemic whether it would be compensating this cohort. It said no.

ENDS

Notes

1

Figures provided by the House of Lords Library in response to a question by Natalie Bennett.

Tuition Fees Loans

A student starting a course in the 2017/18 academic year would have been able to take out a tuition fees loan of up to £9,250 per year. At the end of a 3-year course beginning in 2017, these students may have taken on a maximum of £27,750 of student loan debt in order to pay tuition fees.

Maintenance Loans for Living Costs

Following the end of the NHS bursary, student nurses and midwives were able to apply for maintenance loans for living costs. While the amount borrowed varies depending on a student's circumstances, in the 2018/19 academic year, the maximum amounts of maintenance loans available per year were:

- £11,354 for people studying in London
- £8,700 for people studying elsewhere
- £7,324 for people living at home while studying

On average, in 2017/18, students took out an income contingent maintenance loan worth £5,590. In 2018/19, this increased to £6,150 (Department for Education, [Student Support for Higher Education in England 2019](#), 21 November 2019, p 1).

2

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nursing-students-to-receive-5-000-payment-a-year>

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