



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.

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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**  
**President**  
**British Health Professionals in**  
**Rheumatology**

**Dr Theresa Shaw**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Foundation of Nursing Studies**

**Dr Cheryl 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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**Dr Crystal Oldman**  
**Chief Executive**  
**The Queen's Nursing Institute**

**Professor Maureen Baker**  
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**Royal College of General Practitioners**

**Cathy Warwick CBE**  
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**Royal College of Midwives**

**Professor Judith Ellis**  
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**Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health**

**Janine Tregelles**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Royal Mencap Society**

**Richard Evans**  
**Chief Executive Office**  
**The Society and College of Radiographers**

**Dr Rosemary Gillespie**  
**Chief Executive**  
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**Dave Prentis**  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gail Cartmail', written in a cursive style.

**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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