

NHS Learning Support Fund and Recent Developments

Transcript

Darren Hanson

So I'm going to speak to you today about the NHS Learning Support Fund.

So it was set up back in September 2020 and replaced the previous Learning Support Fund that had been put in place after the bursaries were decommissioned.

So it has been expanded and there was a lot of new funding available for students on healthcare courses.

So you can see there's a lot of different allowances available.

There's a training grant, specialist subject payment, parental support, travel and dual accommodation expenses, and the exceptional support fund.

So I will be going through each of those in detail as I go through the presentation.

So the general eligibility criteria is that the students must be in receipt or eligible for the full student loan package which would be the tuition fees and the maintenance loan.

We do have things in place for students who don't wish to take out a loan for personal reasons.

And we will check their eligibility and check if they would have been eligible for a student loan had they applied for one.

So just because they haven't taken one out doesn't preclude them from actually receiving the NHS LSF.

They do need to be actively in training.

So if they do step off the course for any reason their payments will stop at that point.

And if they have been paid in advance because we do pay termly, they may go into an overpayment situation if that's the case, depending at what point they withdraw.

So it is important that students and the universities let us know as soon as somebody withdraws from the courses, to stop that.

They do need attend a university in England.

So it's not open to universities in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.

It is only open to universities in England, but the students can actually be receiving their student finance funding from Wales, Northern Ireland, or Scotland as well as England.

But they have to be attending a university in England to receive it.

And they also have to be in attendance on a specified date.

And I'll show you those dates later on in the presentation, to be eligible to receive the funding, sorry.



And it is open to nursing, midwifery, and many of the Allied Health professional courses.

So that's the list of the courses that are available, I won't go through it because it's a bit of a tongue twister when you're trying to say all of those out loud.

But foundation degrees are not eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund, just to make that clear on there.

So I'll just let you have a read of that slide if you wish to do so.

So you will see that physio – sorry, paramedics are on there and I've got an additional slide regarding paramedics because their rules are slightly different to the other Allied Health professionals.

So paramedics can only receive these if their course started after September 2020.

And the students must be on undergraduate or postgraduate paramedic courses that lead to registration with the HCPC.

If they don't then they won't be eligible, so the paramedic Dip HEs and foundation degrees are not eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund.

Paramedics also studying a second degree are currently not eligible for the NHS LSF as they are not eligible for the student loan package so they can't receive it either at the moment.

So the actual allowances that are available, the first one and the main one is the £5,000 per academic year per student for the training grant.

It's non-repayable, so it's not part of the loan, it's actually a top-up for the loan that the students don't have to pay back.

And it is to encourage more students to go into the healthcare professions.

If they also was studying any of these specialist subjects and these are the hard to recruit subjects currently, mental health nursing, learning disability nursing, radiography, both diagnostic and therapeutic.

Prosthetics, and orthotics, and orthotopics which is hard to say, and podiatry.

Any of those will receive an additional £1,000 on top of the £5,000 per year if they are studying any of those courses.

And that's to try and encourage more students into those professions as they're hard to recruit currently.

That may change in the future and Department of Health and Social Care do let us know which courses are the hard to recruit courses.

So they will crunch the numbers and see if that is still the case probably in the next three years after this has been running.

And there may be additional ones added or some may be removed.

But we have that all built into our system.

So anyone who does actually apply for one of those subjects automatically has it uprated to the £6,000 rather than the £5,000.

They don't have to apply for that separately.

Combined courses that include one of the hard to recruit courses also receive that £1,000 uplift.

So in the example there it's the adult and mental health nursing course would receive it because mental health nursing is included within that course.

So there are a number of combined courses that do receive the uplift as well.

Parental support is available for any students who have dependent children.

It is paid per student, not per child, so it's a flat rate of £2,000 per student regardless of how many children they have, as long as they have parental responsibility for a child who is either under the age of 15 at the start of the academic year or under the age of 17 if the child is registered with special educational needs.

That's payable along with the training grant in termly instalments as well.

So they can apply for that at the same time as the training grant.

Now, as we know, every student on a healthcare course does have to go on practice placements.

So to make that cost neutral for the students we have the Travel and Dual Accommodation Expenses, TDAE which is available to the students to reclaim those excess costs that they're actually paying while they're on placement.

So for example, if it's costing them £2 to go to university every day but while they're on placement it's costing them £5, that additional £3 will be repayable to the student if they put a claim in for it, in simple terms.

And it does say there that we expect the students to use the cheapest form of transport available to them.

But obviously that's subject to as to where the students are studying, what their shifts are, you know, if they're doing a late-night shift and there's no public transport available then the cheapest form may be by taxi.

But obviously we don't expect there to be [Harry 00:06:43] Lamborghinis and things or going by helicopter.

But, you know, it's all subjective.

So we do tell the students to clear any of those costs with the university before because the universities are the ones who'd sign this off.

We don't have sight of what the students are doing so the universities are relied upon to make that judgement call as to whether that was the most appropriate method of transport.

We do have a number of universities that have their placements in rural areas so it's more convenient for them to actually hire a car for the students.

They will sometimes pay that upfront for the students and then we reimburse the student, and they reimburse the university for it.

So depending on what the situation is, you know, it can be different types of things.

So it's – it is based on the type of university and where they're located, and the placements.

If a student does have to stay away from their normal accommodation while they're on placement there's also a temporary accommodation cost up to a maximum of £55 per night for them to stay in temporary accommodation.

So that could be a hotel, Airbnb, bed and breakfast or they may want to stay with a friend or a relative.

And they can claim additional costs back for that.

The Exceptional Support Fund is also available.

So this is a hardship fund for students who find themselves in unforeseen difficulty financially while they're on the courses.

You know, with the best will in the world, students will plan and make financial plans for while they're on the course, but we know these courses can be three, four years sometimes and things can change during that period.

So it could be that their rent's increased, they've had a relationship breakdown, so they've not got the same money coming into the household.

So this is a bit of a safety net for those students where they can receive an additional £3,000, that's the maximum they can receive per year.

What we ask them to do is to send in details of their income and expenditure for the household, details of everyone who lives with them including the children, a partner if they have one.

And then we do basically an income versus expenditure calculation based on that information.

If it is demonstrated there was a shortfall in their income for the academic year, we will pay them 100% of that shortfall up to the maximum of £3,000.

If the first time they claim it they don't use the full £3,000 they can make subsequent claims after that as well.

What we also do with that, if a student does apply for it, we give them a transparent breakdown of what we've used, how that's been calculated.

So if they didn't receive something and then they realise, oh, I didn't tell them about my rent costs or something like that, you know, they can see exactly what figures we've used.

And they can then send that additional information and we will redo that calculation for them.

And as I say, if they've not used the full £3,000 and then they find they're in even more financial difficulty later, you know, another cost goes up, they can reapply for it and we will top it up, up to the maximum of the £3,000.

Tracey Mack

Darren.

Darren Hanson

Yes.

Tracey Mack

Just before you move on, we've got the first question.

Darren Hanson

Oh, thank you.

Female

Going on to the TDAE, is there a limit to how long the temporary accommodation cost can be claimed for?

Darren Hanson

No, there's no limit to it, as long as they're on the placement at the time for the temporary accommodation then they can claim for the entirety of that.

It would – Travel and Dual Accommodation Expense as well, we know that some, depending on the course they're on, some students can do a three-month placement.

You know, so they may want to claim partway through the placement.

They don't have to wait till the end because we don't want to keep people out of pocket, you know, because they're paying these costs upfront as well.

So they can do that but there's no limit on the length of time as long as the university confirm they were on placement during that time when they needed that temporary accommodation, okay?

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

Thank you.

So how does it work with the student loan and benefits?

So the allowances are not means tested and do not affect any student finance payments.

So it has no impact on the amount of student finance that they will receive.

That includes the full maintenance loan and as we know these courses tend to be quite long courses as well, not the usual 30 weeks.

So they do get an uplift for long courses as well and it doesn't have any impact on that either.

It is completely separate, and they do apply for it separately to the NHS rather than applying through student loans.

If the students are in receipt of any social security benefits they will need to contact their social security benefit provider to see if it will have any impact.

But we've not had any notifications from anybody that it has had any impact.

It is a non-means tested gift from the NHS to assist these students.

So we don't imagine it would have any impact on benefits and we've not heard anything since it's been running since 2020 so I'm assuming not.

I'm sure we would have heard something if it was.

Okay. So the NHS LSF is applied for once a year.

So they do have to apply for it annually.

They will use our NHS LSF application system.

New students will be invited to apply from the 2nd of May 2022 for this academic year.

Continuing students, we send out invites to them to prompt them to actually apply.

And we do that in batches of around 5,000 per week.

And those started going out on Monday, so we've started to invite those students just to prompt them.

It also allows us to, as you can imagine, there's a lot of people applying for this, so it helps us with the getting the work done in a timely manner as well and making sure the payments are set up for them in time for the next academic year.

Students should still apply for the maintenance loan and the tuition fees from the Student Loans Company if they wish to do so because this isn't for that purpose.

So I mentioned before, the payments are made at different times to the student loan.

The reason we've done that is we still make three termly payments, but we make them midterm rather than at the beginning of the term.

The reason for that is it helps the students with their financial planning because they know they're going to get another injection of money partway through the term which will then hopefully help with the tuition on the courses as well.

Because we do know a lot of students will have a lot of costs upfront when they first start the course.

And then they're probably struggling for money partway through, so this will give them another injection of money partway through, which will hopefully last till the end, then they get the next student finance payment and so on and so forth throughout the year.

So that's the reason that was done like that.

Students must be on attendance however on a specific date in order to receive these payments.

So in order to protect the public purse, as this is a public funding, the students can't have withdrawn prior to the date the attendance is confirmed.

If they do withdraw prior to those dates they won't be eligible for anything until they return to the courses.

So for September and October starters the date is the 1st of November.

If they withdraw from the course prior to that date then they won't be eligible for the funding until they return.

January and February starters, is the 1st of March, March and April, starters is the 1st of May.

What we do at that point is we will contact all the universities that have courses that start on those cohorts.

And we will ask them to go into the HEI portal and just confirm who is in attendance on that date.

If they come back and say, yes, they're in attendance the payments are released.

If they say they're not in attendance then the payments obviously won't be released to the students.

So just a little bit of additional information about the payments.

Students on part-time courses will receive a pro rata payment equivalent to the length of the course.

So say they were doing a three-year course over six years they would get 50%, which would be £2,500 for the training grant.

Students do need to reapply for it every year.

And the additional £1,000 for the specialist subject payment, as I said before, is automatically added when they apply for the training grant if they choose one of those specialist subjects.

It's stuck. Ah, there we go.

Right. And additional information that's just come out recently is about maternity leave.

So, Department of Health and Social Care have now confirmed that students who go on maternity leave during their courses can now receive the LSF payments whilst on maternity leave.

So we will leave them in place while the student is on maternity leave up to a maximum of 12 months.

So if a student does go off partway through a year, they will need to however reapply for it if that covers another academic year while they're on maternity leave.

But this isn't counted towards the allowances that they've received, its an additional payment.

So we will pay them for maternity.

It's the same for adoption leave as well, they can have up to a maximum of 12 months for adoption leave as well.

Evidence is generally the student finance letter, so that could be as I said before, from England, Wales, Northern Ireland, or Scotland.

And they just have to confirm that they are eligible to apply for both the tuition fee and maintenance loan.

As I said before they don't have to – actually have to be in receipt of it, it could be that they've been means tested out of the maintenance loan for some reason due to income levels.

If that is the case then we will still pay it to them, it's just demonstrating that they are eligible to apply for it in the first place.

And that makes them eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund.

Anyone who is on a tuition fee only as a European student, would not be eligible for it.

But any students who are European students who have got home status would be eligible and so they would be able to apply for the maintenance loan as well.

If a student isn't in receipt of the loan, we would then do the evidence checks for them.

So they would generally upload their passport with any equivalent visas if that was the case within that and give us details of where they've been resident for the last three to five years if they – before joining the course.

We will then determine their eligibility for them.

If they would have been eligible for a student loan then we will make the payments for the NHS Learning Support Fund to them.

It's playing up.

For parental support, we just ask for the youngest child's birth certificate.

And the reason for that is that the – if they've got more than one child obviously the youngest child will last the longest, so they won't have to upload it again every subsequent year, you know, if one of the children is 14 and then turns 15 during the academic year and then they're going to have to upload another one.

So we do ask for only one ID for a child that meets the criteria as it is per student and not per child.

So it will be the birth certificate, or a passport and they sign the declaration to say that they have parental responsibility for that child.

If the child is 15 or 16 years of age, they would also need to upload evidence that the child is registered with special educational needs which could be a SEN report or a letter from their school, or, you know, something like that to show that they have been registered with special educational needs.

And they have a plan in place and then that will be payable for those as well.

We do have lots of resources available for universities.

We have a HEI toolkit which has all sorts of materials that we've either been requested, or we've created ourselves.

And it's really useful.

There's videos in there that you can play to students.

There's presentations.

We've done email templates that you can just send out to let students know about this.

So if you are running a healthcare course, there's templates there that you can just paste in, send to all the students on your courses to let them know that this funding is available to them.

It is free funding to assist these students while they're on the courses, you know, and to assist with the tuition as well.

So please do let them know.

If there are any things that aren't available in the toolkit that you think, ooh, that would be really handy, do contact us and let us know because we can get those produced and add them to the toolkit for you.

And a number of universities have done that in the past.

So if there's anything there that you would like to have added please let us know.

There's also a sign-up on our website where you'll be able to sign-up for newsletters, if you're not already signed up for those.

We are running sessions similar to this or we're doing sessions on the HEI portal and other areas of student finance and funding.

And we do virtual sessions, or we can come out to your university and talk to your students or your members of staff as well about the funding that's available and answer questions.

So if you do sign up to that you'll get notification of anything new that's happening and also any of these sessions that are available to you.

But please do contact us if you do want us to come and speak to your students, whether that's virtually or in person.

And as I said, we've got a dedicated area of the website for the Learning Support Fund.

Again there's booklets available on there for students so you can point them in that direction if they want further information.

That's where they'll log on to the actual accounts as well and register for an account and make their further applications.

And we're also on Facebook and Twitter.

So you can follow us on there and we post regular updates about the funding and any changes that are made.

We will be hopefully getting the 22/23 policy signed off very shortly.

So if there are any changes in there, the main one is the maternity that I've already spoke to you about which is actually in place from now but will be added to the policy for 22/23.

But if there are any changes we will post those as well through those channels.

So that is the final slide you'll be glad to know.

No one death by PowerPoint.

So if you do have any questions, please raise your hand or have you got any questions?

Tracey Mack

I've got one, Darren, yeah.

Darren Hanson

Brilliant, thanks, Tracey.

Tracey Mack

Can students get the parental support in addition to the parent learning allowance and childcare grant from SFE?

Darren Hanson

Yeah. It's completely separate.

So it's a separate area of funding so it has no impact on your ability to claim anything from any of the other SLC stuff, yeah.

Male

Would you like a mic?

Female

Oh, of course.

Male

Yes, okay, I'll get [unclear].

Darren Hanson

Thank you.

Female

Thank you.

So I work in hardship funding and we often, you know, do an assessment, and then send a student on to do ESF.

And I'm just quite interested what your assessment's like.

Because, you know, we've had some instances where we've rejected the student because our assessment shows no shortfall.

And then they've been granted ESF, so I'm just sort of...

Darren Hanson

Yeah, the ESF one was done in league with NASMA, so when we created it, originally we were going to look at each university's individual hardship funds and try and bolt it onto the end of that.

But because they're so vastly different at each university and also, it's like a finite amount of money that you have available at each university as well.

So what we did, we did a cover all.

So it's basically the same for anybody, whatever area, or whichever university they're attending throughout the country.

So – and it is quite generous.

We probably take into account certain expenses that other hardship funds don't take into account, you know, like insurance and things like that which isn't always taken into account, I know, through some hardship funds.

So we did want to make it fair that every student was treated exactly the same.

So that's probably why sometimes you don't get, you know, they don't get anything from the university, but they might get something from us because it is done slightly different.

And the same for every particular student.

One thing I do want to mention actually, thank you for mentioning about the hardship fund, is the reason that we get the students to go down the route to speak to the university rather than coming straight to us for ESF.

Is that obviously universities can also help with financial advice which we can't do.

We're a remote service, we don't know that particular student's situation.

So some universities I know have voucher schemes available, have allowances if they've got dependent children and things like that which we wouldn't be aware of.

So the main reason, some people say, "Why do you need us to sign it off even though we're not paying them anything?"

It's because we want them to touch base with someone who can actually help them with the financial advice more than the money.

Because some students actually just need that advice, you know, and have someone to speak to and have that support which we can't offer to them, but we know the universities can.

Thank you.

Michelle

Hiya, it's Michelle here from the University of Wolverhampton.

Darren Hanson

Hiya.

Michelle

So mine are kind of more technical questions than about the portal itself.

So at the moment it's quite a manual process.

So we're having to go, when you've got a cohort of – I mean they're probably small for other people around the room.

But like 300 nursing straightaway to kind of go one by one and do those checks, it is quite labour resource intensive.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Michelle

Are there any plans to enhance that to kind of move down the student finance portal way, of kind of an export import functionality?

Darren Hanson

Yeah. It's – as soon as we rolled the portal out that was mentioned to us.

Unfortunately due to funding restrictions with the NHS we have got a constant improvement programme that we're waiting to have the funding approved for.

If we do get that we will be making enhancements to all of our systems.

The eventual idea is to get – because we also administer social work bursaries and then NHS bursaries for medical and dental students.

So we want one portal where they'll just go in and apply for everything.

And have HEI portals available for all of those, you know, all three streams with the download functionality where you can actually download it, compare things and reupload it, which we know everyone's crying out for.

And we really do want to give it to you as soon as possible.

So it on the radar, definitely.

And hopefully, you know, as soon as possible we'll be able to get that introduced.

But we do understand your pain with that because it must be...

Michelle

It's positive to hear that there's those comments have been listened to.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Michelle

And that obviously there's something in progress.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Michelle

The other one again, probably a bit more technical is about cohort changes.

So we've got cases at the moment where we've got a kind of 18-month top-up to associate degree nursing courses.

So they're coming in to finish off.

Well, to do parts of level 5 that they haven't met the NMC regulations and an associate degree to do that as six months and then move on to the 12 months for the final year.

So if we change the cohort with student finance, so say it starts in March but actually from next year we want to move the next year to April, and we do that via our CMS section.

How do we change that with the LSF portal?

Darren Hanson

Right. Are you alright with that, Tracey?

Tracey

I think it's the change – what's it called? Change of – not...

Darren Hanson

Yeah, change of course details.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Michelle

So it's not an automatic thing, we would change it [unclear]?

Tracey Mack

No. Yeah.

Darren Hanson

No. So you – when you go into the portal, you know where the – it's got the course changes functionality.

So you go to the student and then go through and then it opens up different options.

And you can just do course change details and send that through to us.

And then we can update it on our side to change the cohort for you.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Michelle

Can we do it as a mass one, so say it affects the whole cohort, would that just be us contacting NHS directly for our contacts?

Tracey Mack

I can give you a separate contact because there's one person that works on it so I can give you a separate contact.

Michelle

Perfect, [unclear].

Tracey Mack

Maybe make life a bit easier.

Michelle

I've been asked the question for another institution, so yeah, it will be fantastic, thank you very much.

Tracey Mack

Yeah, no worries.

Michelle

That's everything from me.

Darren Hanson

Just come and see us at the end and we'll give you those details. Thank you.

Tracey Mack

We've got a few more questions.

Darren Hanson

Oh, right. Right.



Tracey Mack

I think this is more for med and dents.

Is the 1st of December still the key date students need to be in attendance for the tuition fees to be released?

Darren Hanson

Yeah. No, that's not changed for the medical and dental students.

So as long as they're in attendance on the 1st of December then you can invoice us for the tuition fees for those students.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Tracey Mack

And then we've got quite a few around the same subject.

Can you say more about the LSF and the repeat students?

So we've got a few questions about this.

Darren Hanson

Oh, right, okay. Right.

Yeah. You'll probably know that the Department of Health and Social Care have actually made some policy changes as far as repeating and extending students of concern.

We've actually – call it now additional funding because it's basically the same thing.

They originally agreed just extensions for final year students up to a maximum of 12 months.

They've now confirmed that we can actually do repeats for students for up to 12 months but only in extenuating circumstances.

So it's not available for academic failure alone but if that is due to a bereavement, illness, COVID issues, you know, where people haven't been able to go on placements, or they've not been able to complete their courses, or complete the course years.

Then we can do that additional funding.

So you would just send it through the portal as a course change.

We do need to know details of that, we expect the student to be able to move on to the next stage or complete the course.

There has been an email that went out quite recently to the universities just telling them what the criteria's.

There's about four criteria's, isn't there, that...

Tracey Mack

Yeah. Yeah.

Darren Hanson

...that we need to know, the sort of the dates of the start and end of the period.

It could be that it's a whole year in some examples.

But we just need to know those details and that the student is going to progress into either the next stage or complete the course.

And also the reasons around why they need that additional funding.

If that is then deemed to be a worthy reason by the Department of Health then we will be able to make that additional funding.

But we are trying to get a quick turnaround on these because we know students are, you know, out of pocket at the moment with this.

But please do send them through to us and we'll try and get them done as quickly as possible.

We have a dedicated team who are dealing with these at the moment.

So, you know, they've sort of seen every scenario and we are trying to get them done as quickly as we can.

Tracey Mack

Okay.

Darren Hanson

So does that answer that question?

Tracey Mack

Yeah. Just to go into a bit more further detail.

If a student enrolls on 21/22 stays for five months and then interrupts, resumes the next year, do they get the balance of 21/22 money during the year they resume?

So they do not repeat LSF but any unpaid amount they would have, yeah, they would have had.

Darren Hanson

Yeah. So basically, they would withdraw and then come back.

It depends when they come back to the course.

If they come back at an equivalent point then we would just pick up the funding for that year.

However, we know that some students may need to repeat part of that.

So they would then fall under this additional funding bracket.

So it depends when they're coming back.

If they're – if you're happy to slot them in at the point at the point they stepped off then there's no issues because they're just basically picking up where they left off.

But if there is an overlap where they require some repeat funding because they need to redo a module say, where they would have previously already have done that.

Then they would fall under this additional funding.

So it's – it really depends on the scenario with the particular student.

So it's sort of sending that through to us.

If you knew when they withdrew in the previous year and they came back in the following year on the same date that they withdrew then there wouldn't be an issue because there's no overlap.

But if they come back say two months prior to that then there would be this additional funding situation where we would need to know why the student, you know, withdrew in the first place, and need that additional funding.

But generally there's not an issue with it but they can just join up, yeah.

Does that answer that hopefully? Yeah.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

Have you got another question?

Tracey Mack

Yeah, I've got a couple of questions.

Foundation degrees are not eligible for NHS LSF.

Does this also apply to the integrated courses, for example, adult nursing with integrated foundation year, four years.

Year 1 is a foundation year and completion of this is followed by a three-year BSc.

Would the student not get the NHS LSF funding for the foundation year but would for the remaining three years?

Darren Hanson

I think that's the case, isn't it?

Tracey Mack

It is.

Darren Hanson

Yeah, yeah.

Tracey Mack

Yes, yeah, they would receive the funding for the remainder of three years.

And we've got another question.

European tuition fee loan, do you mean students who have been assessed under the EURS support number?

Or is this also for European students who have been awarded an SFDU support number?

Darren Hanson

I know the first one, the ECURS ones are the – generally the ones that only receive the tuition fees.

And they're the ones we've seen.

I'm not aware of the other one.

You might know a bit more about that, Omar.

Omar

Okay. So basically with the – obviously the Brexit and the [unclear] changes what took place.

Where students have been given one of two categories of free settled status which only allows them for tuition fee.

If they've been given settled status that awards them a maintenance loan support as well from a student loans point of view.

So if they qualify for home fee status and the full settled status five years more and receive a maintenance loan that would qualify them for the support from the NHS as well.

So I think that refers to that in terms of the two different numbers, the way that we categorise them when they receive their 10-digit CRN classification.

Darren Hanson

Yeah, brilliant, thank you very much.

Male

I do apologise, I put the mic down [unclear].

Darren Hanson

That's great, thank you.

Okay. You'll be glad to know that was the last slide.

So we can go onto the Q&A session so I'll...

Tracey Mack

Yeah, I've got another one.

Darren Hanson

Oh, go on.

Tracey Mack

Are those studying medicine eligible for the NHS bursary?

So they're currently...

Darren Hanson

Yeah. So the Learning Support Fund isn't available for medical and dental students.

They will – they have retained the NHS bursary status.



So as you'll know, the bursary was abolished for AHPs, nurses and midwifery students back in 2017.

But it did remain in place for the later years for medical and dental students and that still is the case.

So they will receive that for the later years.

But they can't apply for this because it's not one of the courses covered because they receive the bursary in the later years.

So they don't receive the NHS Learning Support Fund. Okay.

Is that okay? Yeah. Hello.

Female

Great. I've got a question that kind of came about in my mind from the maternity policy you just mentioned.

Darren Hanson

Yes.

Michelle

So as I understand it, a student doing a repeat year is not eligible for the Learning Support Fund, is that correct?

Darren Hanson

Right. Well, there's – there has been some changes with the repeat years which I've not gone into.

And we were wanting to wait until somebody asked about it to be honest.

So – I knew somebody would.

Female

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

So, thank you.

Yeah, the Department of Health and Social Care have currently got – we are allowed to fund certain repeat years, but it has to be exceptional circumstances as to why they're repeating.

Academic failure is not a valid reason, it has to be something beyond the student's control.

So it could be illness, bereavement, COVID is one of the ones obviously, which has been there, the main one just recently.

You know, maybe they couldn't go on a practice placement and complete the course because of there was no available because of COVID.

So any of those reasons we would ask that the university apply for it for them through the HEI portal.

There's a number of questions they just have to answer to explain why the student requires that repeat or extended funding.

And then we will then assess that, if it's a valid reason then they can receive up to a maximum of 12 months additional funding.

But it's not automatically given to students like it was under the bursary scheme, so yeah.

Female

Okay, great, thank you.

Darren Hanson

Thank you very much.

Female

Would maternity, do you expect that would kind of fall under that?

Darren Hanson

No, maternity's completely separate.

That's why that's a separate policy.

Female

Right.

Darren Hanson

So maternity is automatically eligible for the 12 months.

So they don't have to have an exceptional reason, yeah.

Female

Okay. My thoughts there is though that perhaps we have a student that goes on an authorised break of study while they're on maternity leave.

They return the next year and they're technically repeating because perhaps they finished halfway through.

Darren Hanson

Yeah, so that would be fine because they'd be returning to the course after a period of maternity leave which is covered.

So yeah, that's not a problem.

Female

Okay, but it was the 12 months, sorry to be difficult.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Female

But say they're on a maternity leave for 12 months and then they're coming back to do another six months repeating.

Darren Hanson

Yeah, that would also be fine.

Female

That would count?

Darren Hanson

Because of the maternity reason sort of covers them for that.

So they can just return to the course whenever their maternity finishes and carry on if they do need to repeat something because they, you know, they need that additional funding again **then that's fine.**

Female

Okay, yeah. Brilliant, thank you.

Darren Hanson

Thank you.

Tracey Mack

I've got another question.

What support do students receive if they study in England but are from Wales?

Darren Hanson

Yeah. So that will be covered.

So any area of the UK is covered under the NHS Learning Support Fund as long as they're studying at a university in England.

So if they were studying in Wales and they were an English student they wouldn't be eligible for this.

We only cover English universities.

So as long as the university is located in England, the student can be from Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales and will receive the NHS Learning Support Fund as normal.

So they would just upload their Welsh or Scottish or Northern Ireland student finance letter and that's fine.

Tracey Mack

Okay.

Male

Any other questions from the room? Microphone.

Darren Hanson

Thank you.

Male

Yeah, sorry if it's obvious to everyone else in the room.

But the bit about confirming active status on particular dates.

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Male

How does that actually work in practice?

Darren Hanson

So what it is, it's we have a portal so when the students apply they create an account, and they make their application.

We approve the application and that makes them live in the portal.

So they'll have like a dropdown menu which will say what is the status of this student, will have the student details.

The university will then go into that and just make – they say, yeah, they're in attendance or, no, they're not, they've left.

And they can update that as much as they want throughout the academic year.

So as soon as on the, say the 1st of November as it will be for September and October starters, the university will go in hopefully on that day or at some point during that week.

And make everybody who is in attendance say they're here.

And then we would just - that will then activate the payments through our system and pay the students.

Male

Okay. So they...

Darren Hanson

Yeah.

Male

Do they have to do it individually by student?

Darren Hanson

Yeah, unfortunately that is the way it is.

We are looking at some advanced technology to try and get this done.

As you can see, we – with NHS we don't always have the resources.

So we've got the portal which is a Godsend in itself.

We've never had that before; it was always via email and spreadsheets which was a nightmare.

So yeah, we've got the portal.

We are looking at getting advanced functionality in there where you'll be able to download a list of the students, match them against yours and then reupload them.

So that is in the pipeline, but I can't say when that will be done.

But it's on the radar, put it that way, but yeah, so yeah, at the moment it is literally going in and saying, right, this is the adult nursing for year two.

They're in attendance, they're not in attendance, yeah.

Male

Thanks.

Darren Hanson

Yeah. Thank you.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

I've got some more questions; I've not got any in the room.

Can you explain the reason for moving the NHS bursary of medicine payments to termly payments rather than monthly at a time when some HEI staff would prefer all funding to be paid monthly?

Darren Hanson

Right, well, it went out to consultation, didn't it?

Tracey Mack

We did, yeah.

Darren Hanson

So we did go out to a number of students and universities.

And the mass – vast majority of them did prefer the termly payments to carry in line with how they'd been paid previously under the student loan.

So we did go with the majority vote on that.

But it's sort of out of our hands really.

It was Department of Health and Social Care who wanted to move to the termly payments and they did that bit of exploratory work.

And that was the result that came back to us, so that's why we moved to that.

And just keep in line with how they'd previously been paid.

So that's why it's moved to termly payments for the bursary as well.

Tracey Mack

Okay. Well, I've got some more if there's nobody else.

Are there any plans to change the regs for paramedic science as it causes huge problems for those with a degree already looking to – already looking to retrain?

Darren Hanson

We don't know anything about that.

Do you know, Omar, at all?

Omar

Can I get – oh, it's a bit loud, isn't it?

So far, no, I mean obviously it's one of the areas that has had quite a bit of contention in the past and continues to do that.

But rest assured, I mean I – the way I look at it is that there are yearly dialogues that take place with the Department for Education, different departments for health, Department for Health and Social Care etc.

And the decisions are really made in parliament.

So they're very much out of our hands.

So it's down to the parliamentary politicians and the lawmakers who decide what will or will not qualify for enhanced funding.

So it's a matter of watch this space and let's see what happens.

I do know that a couple of years ago when the enhancements to the exception list of courses was made, there was initial mooting around what would qualify including diplomas and certain level 4 and 5 courses.

But that obviously didn't take the bite from a parliamentary point of view.

So right now, no, but let's watch this space and see what happens.

And if you can put enough pressure on parliament and politicians, I'm sure there might be some reward for you.

Darren Hanson

Yeah, I was just going to say the same thing.

I think a lot of it is make enough noise and things tend to happen.

So I would recommend people just keep lobbying to get that done because we did think it was under review and then they keep saying, "Yeah, it's under review, it's under review."

And then we're just in the same position.

So yeah, as I say, we're the administrator so we can only go by the rules that are set down by Department of Health and Social Care.

But yeah, put enough pressure on them and they may change their mind and do something hopefully. I didn't say that.

Have we got any more questions?

Tracey Mack

Yeah, I've got some more, yeah.

For students to receive their NHS bursary a letter is produced to confirm the students' attendance.

Is there any other way of confirming the students' attendance beside a letter?

Darren Hanson

For the NHS bursary?

Tracey Mack

Yeah, for the NHS bursary, so I presume that's med and dents.

Darren Hanson

Yeah. Well, what we are looking at doing is introducing a HEI portal for the medical and dental students as well.

We have replaced the NHS bursary system.

We were under [unclear] and we've now introduced a new system that's rolled out this year for the - it's got the longest title in the world, the NHS Bursary Application System, which is very imaginative.

But that rolled out this year.

Unfortunately we did run out of time when we were actually doing it to get a HEI portal in scope.

But we are looking at introducing one in the future.

We are waiting to see if we've got some additional funding to have that developed.

But we do want one because obviously it makes it a lot easier.

It's worked really well for the NHS Learning Support Fund even though that one's not perfect as you're aware of.

But we do want one for those and obviously that would make it a lot easier for you because currently we – that is the spreadsheet, by email process.

And we would obviously be able to tell you that a student was in attendance, a student wasn't in attendance, they've been assessed or haven't been assessed through the portal rather than you having to receive the letter from the student to confirm they've been assessed for the bursary.

But that is a development that we're hoping to introduce in the future, yeah.

I hope that answers that question.

Tracey Mack

And another one with regards to confirming attendance.

Is it on the HEP portal or a different portal? So it's the HEI portal, isn't it?

Darren Hanson

Yeah. Yes, it's for the NHS Learning Support Fund, it's HEI portal.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.

Darren Hanson

Yeah. Okay. Are there any other questions?

No?

Male

[Unclear] to get my steps [unclear].

Darren Hanson

Oh, well, thank you very much.

I'm just glad you've all managed to stay awake after lunch as well.

Tracey Mack

Yeah.



Darren Hanson

Which is – it's always hard work, that's why I stood up because I'd probably nod off if I'd sat down there.

But thank you very much for listening to me.

If there any other questions that you want to add later, you think, oh, I wish I'd asked that, please do forward them on and we will receive those as well afterwards.

If you do want to query anything through any of our social media as well, if there's anything.

They will be able to answer those via DM to you as well.

So please do use all our resources or through our website.

Also you can sign up for our newsletter as well if you wish to do so.

That's on our website, there's a link to do that where we will inform you of any developments, any additional, you know, Department of Health and Social Care are changing rules constantly.

And so we do tend to send them out via that method.

Paul

So if you do want to sign up to that there's a whole list of things because obviously, we do social work bursaries, NHS bursaries for medical and dental students as well as the NHS Learning Support Fund.

So you can sign up for which areas of that you would like information on as well.

And if anything develops in any of those areas, we will send out notifications via that method.

So I would recommend that if you're interested to do so, please do sign up for that and choose which ones you're interested in.

But thank you very much.

Tracey Mack

Yeah, thank you.

Darren Hanson

And we've finished a bit early, so you get a bit of time back which is always a good thing, isn't it?

But thank you.

Tracey Mack

Thank you.

Darren Hanson

Thank you.





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events@slc.co.uk

www.slc.co.uk