

PE1819/B

Petitioner submission of 15 September 2020

Firstly, on behalf of the 'Pay Student Paramedics' Campaign, thank you to the Cabinet Secretary for her letter. I have some points which I would like to address prior to my meeting with the committee on the 24th of September.

In the Cabinet Secretary's response, it is mentioned that Paramedic Science students in Scotland receive additional financial support to cover placement expenses, health and disclosure checks and uniforms.

This support is PPE and is a necessity in order to go out on placement, within the community, hospitals and in the ambulances, therefore this is a requirement (Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 & Health and Safety at Work 1974, Section 9) opposed to being referred to as an aspect of the funding package. Furthermore, Nurses and Midwives receive this, and Student Paramedics are faced with austerity.

The Pay Student Paramedics campaign recognises that students in Scotland are eligible to apply for the normal undergraduate funding package and that financial support is given for placement expenses, health and disclosure checks and uniforms. The campaign also recognises that in Scotland we do not pay for tuition fees and that gives greater support, this is not the issue that student paramedics are raising. The campaign and petition are raising the concern over why Student Paramedics are not eligible for the same funding packages as Student Midwives and Nurses in Scotland?

In the submission it is stated that in Scotland, a decision was taken to maintain the bursary available to Nursing and Midwifery students at a time when our health and care services needed to attract and maintain a sustainable flow of newly qualified registrants in these professions. Based on this, student paramedics would fall under the need to maintain a sustainable flow of newly qualified registrants. The situation with nurses will in time be encountered by Paramedics. The previous path to become a Paramedic was through the Scottish Ambulance Service. You became an employee while training to become a Paramedic and you received a salary. This model is no longer an option as published by the Scottish Ambulance Service, therefore only students who can afford to study BSc Paramedic Science will be able to become a registered Paramedic. Therefore, it is feasible that the current number of applicants to join the ambulance service will fall. Therefore, Student Paramedics should receive the same funding package as Nurses as Midwives?

Nicola Sturgeon said on the 9th of October 2018 "We know the value of our NHS staff and we know the value of our Health Service." I believe this to be true and the success of Paramedicine students receiving the same as Nursing and Midwifery students will help make studying attainable for those who want a career in our health service as Paramedic.

The submission also states “This investment has seen the service achieve over 95% shift coverage over the past three years”.

A UNISON report entitled [“An emergency but no accident”](#), published in May 2019, stated “despite a small increase in numbers 98% of paramedics said their workload was heavier including 83% who stated it was much heavier, it’s not just about call numbers but also about the nature of those calls.” It could be argued that Ms Freeman’s statement of 95% of shift coverage is being completed by a reduced number of employees creating the heavier workloads stated within this report. A report from The Times dated the 12th January 2020 showed from a freedom of information request, that 42,000 shifts were failed to be covered. Based on an average scheduled shift being 12 hours, that equates to 504,000 hours, equating to 21,000 days, equating to 57.5 years.

Therefore, suggesting that we do not need to encourage many more Paramedics into the profession as Nurses, I would suggest to this being an unfair statement. I would like to address the use of workforce planning, which was mentioned in the submission. During the first spike of COVID-19, Student Paramedics were hired and given temporary status to assist. Crews consistently must work through breaks and get sent to locations far from their intended areas. It was stated that “Over 95% shift coverage over the past 3 years” What of the other 5%?

It is mentioned that robust contingencies in place to deal with staff absences to ensure patient care is not affected. However, with 42,000 shifts not covered and 21,000 days, there is a need for Paramedics and a good supply of people who wish to enter the profession. The extra funding would therefore help make studying Paramedic Science more accessible for those who want a career in our health service and providing care in the future of our country.