



Department
of Health

Reforming the Social Work Bursary

The Government Response to the Consultation

May 2013

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Reforming the Social Work Bursary

The Government Response to the Consultation

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Executive summary

On 27 May 2012, the Department of Health published a consultation paper “Reforming the Social Work Bursary: a paper for consultation”. The consultation closed on 27 July. The consultation paper included five options for reform. There were 84 responses, of which 41 preferred Option 3: to retain the undergraduate bursary from the second year only and the current postgraduate scheme, and to cap the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students who receive a bursary. The consultation paper was accompanied by an impact assessment. An equality analysis was carried out but not published.

Following the consultation and further stakeholder engagement, the Government has decided to implement Option 3. An announcement was made on 26 October to provide clarity to prospective students and HEIs.

Information packs for students and HEIs have been published separately.

Arrangements for social work bursaries in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are unaffected by this consultation.

Introduction

This paper sets out the outcome of the consultation on reforming the social work bursary in England.

The consultation took place between 25th May and 27th July 2012, and was published on the Department of Health website. The Department emailed a weblink of the consultation paper to interested stakeholders, including organisations represented on the Social Work Reform Board.

The Department has considered all 84 responses to the consultation. The Department has also worked with the Centre for Workforce Intelligence and the External Reference Group (consisting of social work employers and HEIs) to get a better understanding of social worker supply and demand. The Department has also worked with the External Reference Group in developing the capping methodology and criteria which forms part of Option 3.

The consultation paper asked nine questions and the responses, together with what we heard from the Centre for Workforce Intelligence and the External Reference Group, are summarised within this paper.

The Government has decided to implement Option 3 and an announcement was made on 26th October 2012. This means that undergraduate students will not receive a bursary in year one, but will do in years two and three when they are on placement. The postgraduate bursary is unchanged. There will be a cap on the number of bursary recipients at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The Department will also be undertaking research into undergraduate student finance to explore whether means testing is feasible in the medium to long term.

Chapter 1 sets out the background to the consultation, the consultation process and the questions we asked. Chapter 2 sets out what you told us in the consultation. Chapter 3 sets out how the Department proposes to reform the bursary with Chapter 4 explaining implementation. Annex 1 lists the respondents to the consultation. Annex 2 provides the text of the announcement on 26 October. Annexes 3 and 4 set out the terms of reference and membership for the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group and the Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group.

Information for HEIs and students on how the new arrangements will work has been developed by the Social Work Prioritisation Advisory Group and has been published separately.

Chapter 1: The Consultation: What We Asked and Why

This chapter sets out the reasons for reforming the social work bursary, the consultation process and the options for reform that were consulted on

Objectives of Reform

The Government's objectives for reforming the bursary were set out in the consultation document and are to:

- further improve the quality of social work graduates, in line with the Social Work Task Force's recommendation to use the bursary as a lever for improving quality. This includes consideration of attrition rates and enhanced future employment prospects;
- maintain a good supply of high quality graduates and support widening participation; and
- ensure value for money is maximised from the significant level of investment in social work education and training. This includes moving away from a demand-led model and limiting the number of students who receive a social work bursary from the 2013 academic year onwards, which will reduce costs while ensuring that the funding available is used as effectively as possible.

The Consultation Process

The consultation document set out why reform was needed, issues to be taken into account in reforming the bursary and options for reform.

Departmental officials discussed reform proposals with the Education Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board and a number of other stakeholders, including an External Reference Group¹. This engagement generated fifteen reform options and evaluation criteria. The Department's initial view of each option was included within the Impact Assessment and the criteria were used to shortlist the five options set out in more detail in the consultation document. A literature review was also carried out by the Social Care Workforce Research Unit to inform the consultation and published in the impact assessment.

The Department of Health undertook a formal consultation on reforming the social work bursary from 27 May to 27 July 2012. The consultation paper was published on the Department of Health website together with an impact assessment. The Department emailed a weblink of the consultation paper to interested stakeholders, including organisations represented on the Social Work Reform Board.

¹ Membership of the SWRB Education Working Group and the External Reference Group includes representatives of social work employers, HEIs, trade unions and front line social workers and students.

Consultation Questions

The questions we asked are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Consultation Questions	
1	Which options do you support, and why? Please rank them in priority order
2	Which option would have the greatest impact on improving the quality of social work graduates and why?
3	What do you think the impact of each option will be on the supply of social workers, and why?
4	Which opinion represents greatest value for money?
5	Do you have a view on the balance between the number of bursary recipients and the level of payment? Do you have a view on the number of bursary recipients and capping methodology?
6	Do you agree with the evidence presented in the impact assessment on the costs and benefits? If not, please provide evidence
7	Is there a risk that any of the options would disadvantage people who share a protected characteristic? Please provide reasons for your answer?
8	Do any of the options create opportunities or advancing equality between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? If so how?
9	Do you think there are any other criteria that ought to be considered? If so which and why are they important.

Options

The options for reforming the bursary are set out in Table 2:

Table 2: Options for reform	
Option 1:	Introduce a means-tested Undergraduate and Postgraduate Bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.
Option 2:	Retain the postgraduate bursary only with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.
Option 3:	Retain undergraduate bursary from the second year and postgraduate scheme remains as now with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.
Option 4:	End the bursary completely to reinvest in other social work training.
Option 5:	Create a new scheme based on successful completion of the Assessed and

	Supported Year in Employment
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Conclusion

The Department undertook a significant amount of stakeholder engagement in preparing for the consultation. Stakeholders are supportive of the need for reform and have worked constructively with the Department to assist in devising the best way forward.

Chapter 2: Your Response: What You Told Us

This chapter sets out the number of respondents and summarises the responses. The views below are the views of respondents and not the Department.

84 responses were received from across the sector. Some respondents did not respond to all questions.

Table 3: Number of Responses	
Category	Numbers of responses
Students	20
HEIs	34
LAs	12
National Bodies	11
Other	7
Total	84

A list of organisations that responded is at Annex 1. In addition, we received approximately 20 responses from students who did not comment on the consultation options but said they would not have been able to undertake a course without the bursary.

Question 1: Which options do you support, and why? Please rank them in priority order

The table below shows the number of top preferences for each option. Not all responses ranked the five options. Option 3 received most top preferences and was the most preferred option overall.

Table 4: Respondents' Preferences

Options		Number of Top Preferences	Total number of preferences
3	Retain the undergraduate Bursary from the second year and the current postgraduate scheme with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary	41	68
1	Introduce a means-tested undergraduate and postgraduate bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary	27	61
2	Retain the postgraduate Bursary only with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary	7	44
5	Create a new scheme based on successful completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in employment	2	40
4	End the bursary completely to reinvest in other social work education training	0	37

Question 2: Which option would have the greatest impact on improving the quality of social work graduates and why?

Some respondents commented that Option 1 is the fairest option, as this would target resources on students who were in most need of financial support. Some respondents felt that it is important not to deter those with experience of care (who come from lower socio-economic groupings) from studying due to financial circumstances as they had a more instinctive leaning towards social work. Some respondents felt students from this background make “better” students. Some respondents felt that the current system of means testing some elements of the postgraduate bursary works.

Some respondents felt Option 2 would most improve the quality of Social Work graduates, as it would ensure that entry into the social work workforce would become more oriented towards postgraduate students. Some respondents provided anecdotal evidence that suggested these are the most popular students with some employers. A number of respondents expressed the view that postgraduates were more likely to enter the social work profession in the context of 25% of social work graduates not taking up employment as social workers. A number of respondents disagreed with the view that postgraduates make better social workers than those at undergraduate level.

Some respondents considered that Option 3 would produce graduates that are fully committed to the profession. Year 1 undergraduate students could be assessed thoroughly prior to going out on placement. Those who met the required standard could progress to Year 2 and receive the bursary, which would be a strong incentive for ensuring high quality delivery of teaching and learning. Not paying a bursary in undergraduate year 1 would mean that the bursary would not be paid in the year in which there is most attrition.

No one commented on Option 4 in relation to quality.

Respondents felt that Option 5 might assess suitability for working in social work, as the bursary payment would be received after taking up employment. Respondents also commented that this option does not provide financial support during the period of study.

Question 3: What do you think the impact of each option will be on the supply of social workers, and why?

In summary, all respondents felt that all the options would lead to a further reduction in applications for social work qualifying courses in addition to the reductions forecast due to the changes in Higher Education funding introduced in the 2012 academic year. Views were mixed on whether this was good or bad. Comments suggested that if the reductions were in the lower quality courses this would be acceptable but it would be detrimental to social work if the reductions were in the higher quality courses. Concerns were also expressed about courses that had expanded and were experiencing difficulty in sourcing quality placements.

Most respondents felt that the bursary should be offered at both postgraduate and undergraduate level because postgraduates have limited alternative funding sources and some respondents argued that the bursary should be continued for undergraduates because the length of practice placements made it difficult for social work students to take a part time job to help fund their study unlike other students. These respondents put forward the view that the bursary acting as an incentive to train as social workers.

Question 4: Which opinion represents greatest value for money?

Value for Money (VfM) is defined in “Managing Public Money²” as “the process under which organisation’s procurement, projects and processes are systematically evaluated and assessed to provide confidence about suitability, effectiveness, prudence, quality, value and avoidance of error and other waste, judged for the public sector as a whole”.

² Managing Public Money, HM Treasury, 2011

Some respondents saw Options 4 and 5 as having the greatest potential to reduce expenditure but this would not represent value for money, as there was no guaranteed supply of high quality social workers. Means testing (Option 1) was felt to target resources at students who most needed financial support. Some respondents also noted that not providing an undergraduate bursary (Option 2) would target resources towards postgraduate students who did not receive other funding, as undergraduates are eligible for mainstream student support. Not funding undergraduate year 1 (option 3) was felt to address VFM by recognising that most attrition takes place in year one of the undergraduate course. Some respondents felt that Option 3 was the best option if VFM is being measured on a more compact and better skilled workforce.

Question 5: Do you have a view on the balance between the number of bursary recipients and the level of payment? Do you have a view on the number of bursary recipients and capping methodology?

Respondents to this question raised issues on the rate of payment and capping methodology. It should be noted that the responses to this question reflect the information available at the time of the consultation. Since the consultation ended, the Department has worked with the External Reference Group to develop a capping methodology, which is detailed in Chapter 4.

Some respondents felt:

- the bursary should cover the full costs of study rather than be a contribution to costs;
- a higher bursary payment should be paid to fewer students than currently;
- more bursary recipients and a smaller payment.
- the value of bursaries should be uprated regularly.
- option 3 provides the fairest system of payment as both undergraduates and postgraduates would receive financial support whilst on placement when the financial need is likely to be the greatest.
- the contribution to postgraduate tuition fees paid by the postgraduate bursary payments should be increased to reflect the rise in postgraduate tuition fees,
- the level of the bursary payment should not reduce as it would cease to be an incentive to undertake social work qualifying courses and affect the future viability of social work course provision.

Views were mixed on the impact of capping the number of bursary recipients. In summary, some respondents suggested:

- capping numbers would introduce unhealthy competition between providers;
- capping will make institutions work more closely with employers on placement provision;
- the cap should relate to workforce planning and demographic information;
- the capping mechanism should not favour either the undergraduate or postgraduate routes; and

- further development work needed to be undertaken on how the capping mechanism would work in practice.

Question 6: Do you agree with the evidence presented in the impact assessment on the costs and benefits? If not, please provide evidence.

Most respondents agreed with the evidence set out in the consultation document and the impact assessment. A respondent commented that the consultation paper is well argued and presents best evidence from the methodology used. Others suggested there was no contrary evidence. Some respondents raised specific issues:

- the impact assessment did not contain sufficient evidence of the benefits of the bursary;
- the evidence base for the assertion there that postgraduate social workers achieve better outcomes for service users or make better social workers;
- more robust information on supply and demand was needed because of the range of uncertainties summarised by the following comment: ‘We broadly agree with the evidence presented in the impact assessment on costs and benefits, however without further information about Social Work requirements we cannot take a view about which would be most appropriate.’
- social work education is in a challenging period with some respondents referring to evidence from the Million+ Report (Never Too Late to Learn, 2012) that mature students are likely to be discouraged from applying to universities and that there has already been a significant fall in numbers.
- there is a need to make sure that social work attracts mature students from a range of backgrounds and the bursary will support this.

Question 7: Is there a risk that any of the options would disadvantage people who share a protected characteristic? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Question 8: Do any of the options create opportunities or advancing equality between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? If so how?

Many respondents did not answer these questions. The social work student demography includes high levels of mature students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and is predominantly female. Some respondents said that the reforms will disproportionately adversely affect mature student bursary applicants as more than average numbers of mature students undertake social work qualifying courses. Some respondents felt that the changes to higher education funding and bursary reforms would have a significant effect on this group. A typical comment was “Yes, as a mature student, female, single parent the bursary was essential in helping me to study”.

It is important to note that by reducing the number of postgraduate bursary recipients, it is probable that the number of postgraduate bursary recipients receiving the additions to the bursary will reduce:

- Disabled Student Allowance;
- Income-assessed Childcare Allowance;
- Income-assessed Maintenance Grant;
- Income-assessed Adult Dependent Allowance; and
- Income-assessed Parents Learning Allowance.

Comments about means testing included: "Option 1 is the one which would best advance equality and support widening participation within social work education. For us 'widening participation', 'diversity' and 'excellence' are inextricably linked and we believe in order to meet the challenges of 21st century social work, graduates will need to be diversity literate with enhanced cross-cultural understanding and teamwork skills." However, another respondent noted that Option 1 could improve equality but means testing often deters students from applying. Another respondent commented that Options 1-3 providing additional funding will help to enable access to social work programmes for all.

Some respondents felt that means testing would recognise the impact on some protected characteristics and ensure that a financial obstacle is removed for people of low income.

In summary, Options 1, 2 and 3 were felt to provide some opportunities for people from lower socio-economic groupings because they provided some funding to students while they study. Of these three, not funding undergraduates (Option 2) was felt to have least impact.

Option 2 was felt to disadvantage undergraduates, particularly mature students from a low socio-economic grouping who were not able to undertake a postgraduate course. This was seen to prevent a wide range of individuals with valuable life experience entering the social work profession.

Option 3 was seen to provide funding to both undergraduate and postgraduate students during placements when, because of time commitments, they were least able to support themselves.

Another respondent suggested:

- many individuals from socially excluded groups are not the most likely to have obtained a first degree; so only supporting postgraduate students prevents a wide range of individuals with valuable life experience from the social work pool; and
- "Gender and age represent variables that attract significant potential for discrimination when considering financial change. The proposals affect deleteriously on older people and women with caring responsibilities and financial demands".

Options 4 and 5 were seen to disadvantage students because payment (in the case of option 5) would be on completion of the assessed and supported year in employment, and may disadvantage people who are accessing social work education at a later stage in their lives.

Question 9: Do you think there are any other criteria that ought to be considered? If so which and why are they important.

A number of comments were received. Some respondents directed the Department to publications. Respondents raised a number of uncertainties about:

- the impact of the changes to higher education funding including the introduction of higher tuition fees in 2012;
- supply and demand;
- the financial cost to HEIs of implementing the Social Work Reform Board requirements for initial qualifying training;
- the impact of future changes to the Education Support Grant and whether the 30 days skills development would be funded; and
- The continued and increased involvement of service users and carers.

Conclusion

Option 3 was the preferred option of the consultation respondents because it offered financial support to both postgraduates and undergraduates. Respondents acknowledged that more work was needed on how to implement the cap on the number of bursary recipients.

Chapter 3: The Decision: What We Chose and Why

This chapter sets out the selected option and the reasons for choosing it. It also sets out why we decided not to pursue other options. Following the consultation, the Department has decided to implement Option 3. This means that from the 2013 Academic Year:

Table 4: The bursary at a glance

A cap will be placed on the number of bursary recipients at both undergraduate and postgraduate level
<p>The postgraduate bursary will be retained as is and comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basic bursary (including an indicative amount for practice placement travel expenses), • Contribution to tuition fees, • Disabled student allowance, • Income assessed maintenance grant, • Income assessed adults dependent allowance, • Income assessed parents learning allowance, • Income assessed Childcare allowance, and • Different rates for London and outside London.
<p>The undergraduate bursary will be retained for students in years 2 and 3 and comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basic bursary (including an indicative amount for practice placement travel expenses), • Different rates for London and outside London • Different rates for students on Variable Tuition Fees or not.
<p>Practice placement travel expenses will continue to be paid to students who do not receive a bursary but would have under the previous scheme</p>

The reasons why this option was chosen were that it:

- was the option that most respondents favoured, and
- met the policy objectives and evaluation criteria to a greater extent than the other options for the reasons given below.

The savings generated by option 3 are the lowest of all the options. However, The Department believes that the non-monetised risks and costs of the other options outweigh this. In particular, the workforce supply consequences of the other options are currently not well understood and represent a significant risk to implementation. Knowledge and data gaps currently exist which prevent an unambiguous risk free decision. The Departments commits to further information

gathering and assessments to inform future regular reviews of the social work bursary system. In the meantime, option 3 is preferred as a prudent interim approach that generates significant savings in the short term whilst not threatening the security of the system, including sustainability of the social work education market.

By choosing option 3, the Department made the decision to support both undergraduate and postgraduate students whilst they study on the practice placements. This decision immediately ruled out options 2, 4 and 5.

Policy Objectives and Evaluation Criteria met

The following section sets out how Option 3 meets the policy objectives and evaluation criteria set out in the impact assessment.

- **Reducing expenditure**
All consultation options would have reduced expenditure. Option 3 reduces and caps the number of bursary recipients. The capping methodology (described in Chapter 4) provides a way of controlling expenditure and the opportunity to vary numbers depending on available resources.
- **Affordability**
In the 2013 and 2014 academic years, the budget for the bursary will reduce to £73 and £65 million respectively from expenditure of approximately £80 million in 2011. Making no change to the bursary (which some respondents favoured) was not affordable and would not deliver a reduction in expenditure.
- **Value for Money**
HEIs have told us that most undergraduate attrition occurs in year 1. By not paying undergraduates in year 1 of their study, we are targeting students who have passed their assessment of readiness for practice placements and thinks a higher proportion of bursary recipients will take up employment as social workers.

Doubts were raised about the value for money of the existing demand-led bursary because approximately 25% of newly qualified social workers did not take up employment as a social worker or take up a role in social care.

- **Increasing quality/the quality of entrants to the profession**
Paying undergraduates in years 2 and 3 means that students will have passed their readiness to practice test and that the bursary is not paid in year 1 when most attrition happens. The capping methodology provides an opportunity to vary the proportion of undergraduates and postgraduates receiving a bursary.

Option 3 would at least maintain the current quality of entrants to the social work profession but is likely to improve quality in the context of the Social Work Reform Board's reform of initial qualifying education, which is being implemented by HEIs from the 2012 academic year. The College of Social Work is introducing an endorsement scheme for initial education, which will highlight the courses that have successfully implemented the SWRB education reforms. This will link to the Health and Care Professions Council approval process for social work qualifying courses.

There is scope to make quality part of the criteria within the capping regime. Quality was discussed with the External Reference Group in the context of capping. It was agreed that the bursary capping would only be able to address quality issues to a limited extent, mainly in terms of the quality of entrants to HEIs. To a lesser extent, capping the bursary could theoretically be used manage quality provision, for example by linking 'approved' HEIs to the various quality criteria contained in the College of Social Work's new endorsement scheme. However, time would not be available for all colleges to complete that process by 2013, and students applying for 2013 academic year would need to know prior to the beginning of the application process whether a particular course was approved or not.

- **Maintaining a sufficiency of supply/ Security of supply**

Option 3 has the least negative impact on the supply of social workers as it gives the students the chance to receive support at the time they are in most financial need while they are studying and on practice placements. However, we agree with respondents that Option 3 may result in a drop off in undergraduate applicants as the first year of undergraduate study will not attract a bursary (although student loans will be available).

It is too early to have a detailed understanding of the impact of the changes to higher education funding starting in academic year 2012.

We commissioned the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI) to assess the impact of the five consultation options on supply and demand. CfWI held a workshop with the External Reference Group and, following discussion, CfWI calculated that implementation of option 3 in 2013 academic year will lead to a reduction of 18% undergraduate and 12% postgraduate applications to qualifying courses. This reduction would be in addition to the potential reduction in students in 2012.

The Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group will advise on supply and demand on an ongoing basis, informed by CfWI's analysis.

- **Widens Participation**

Students from all backgrounds are able to apply for a bursary. Part of the criteria for HEIs to use when determining the shortlist for bursary recipients will be whether applicants have experience of the care system either as a service user or carer. Anecdotal evidence is that students in this category come from a lower socio-economic background.

- **No adverse impact on equality**

The equality analysis has shown that there a high proportion of mature students undertaking social work qualifying undergraduate courses. These will continue to be supported in years 2 and 3 and when undertaking postgraduate courses. It is important to note that by reducing the number of postgraduate bursary recipients, it is probable that the number of postgraduate bursary recipients receiving the additions to the bursary will reduce. We will undertake a survey of student demographics of social work courses in 2013 to monitor any equality impacts of these reforms.

- **Fair**

Option 3 recognises that students undertaking practice placements do not have time to take a part job to support themselves in addition to study and the placement. Therefore, a work/life balance is maintained.

- **Administration**

In their response to the consultation document, NHS Business Services Authority informed us that this option would slightly reduce the cost to NHS BSA of administering the bursary, although this would depend on their role in the capping regime and the practice placement travel costs. Means testing (option 1) would potentially have been more administratively intensive as more processing of applications would have been required.

- **Flexible**

The Department decided that the bursary was the best way of supporting social work students during the period of study and there is scope to alter the size of the cap and the split between the number of postgraduate and undergraduate bursary recipients. Option 3 maintains the flexibility for Government to establish elite entry routes into the social work profession.

- **Legally compliant**

No change to Section 67 of the Care Standards Act is required.

Why the other options were discounted

This section summarises the reasons why options 1, 2, 4 and 5 were discounted.

The Department agreed with the majority of respondents and decided to support both undergraduate and postgraduate students while they study. Although there were mixed views on whether postgraduates made the “best” (however defined) social workers, there was demand from some employers for postgraduates. In addition, the Department agreed with respondents that pointed out undergraduates in years 2 and 3 undertake 200 days practice placements, which reduces their ability to support themselves. Mainstream student support provided through Student Finance England was available to undergraduates in addition to the bursary and in year 1, undergraduates would be more able to support themselves. The Department was also aware that postgraduates do not receive any other public funding (other than through accelerated entry programmes) and it was therefore appropriate to support postgraduates. This decision effectively ruled out options 2, 4 and 5.

- **Option 1**

Means testing would have applied to both undergraduates and postgraduates during the whole of their course. The key factor was that the Department does not have a robust understanding of social work undergraduate students in order to devise a means-testing regime. Assumptions were made by respondents on the means-testing regime and whether this would treat undergraduates as “dependent” or “independent”, which affected their response to this question. We intend to undertake further research into undergraduate student finances.

- **Option 2**

This was not chosen because the Department decided it was appropriate to fund undergraduates as well as postgraduates, which most respondents preferred.

- **Option 4**

The Department decided that the bursary was the best way of supporting social work students during the period of study. Government may decide to establish elite entry routes into social work in the future and will need to consider how that would interact with the bursary. Although Option 4 generates the highest level of savings, this would lead to significant instability within the social work education market and there was not sufficient robust data to support a decision to implement option 4.

- **Option 5**

The Department was persuaded by respondents who argued that students needed funding at the time they are studying rather than receive a funding afterwards.

- **“Do Nothing”**

A number of respondents would have preferred no change, had this been an option. However, the “do nothing” option was not considered a feasible option to consult on, as it was unaffordable and the budget would continue to be demand-led. There were doubts about whether the bursary itself represented value for money as not all bursary recipients took up employment as a social worker and concern had been expressed about whether newly qualified social workers met the needs of employers, which led to Government introducing the Newly Qualified Social Worker programmes.

Conclusion

The Department has decided to implement option 3. It was the most preferred choice of consultation respondents. It meets the policy objectives of reducing expenditure, improving quality and maintaining sufficiency of supply. The Department recognises that this is a challenging time for HEIs and implementation of Option 3 provides stability for HEIs providing courses with the capping methodology allowing for continuity and planning of future bursary recipients numbers.

The Department is recognises that data on supply and demand and social work education is patchy and is committed to continue to work with the sector on this and will undertake a survey on social work student demography. The Department has commissioned the Centre for Workforce Intelligence to continue to work with employers on improving the robustness of social work supply and demand data.

Chapter 4: Making It Happen

This chapter sets out the process for implementing the reforms and provides an overview of the capping process.

Capping Methodology

A consultation respondent commented that there are a number of complex factors to be considered within any capping methodology and suggested that this requires much greater research and exploration.

The Department agrees with the assessment that there was a lot of detailed work to be done to develop the capping methodology. During the consultation period and subsequently, the Department has worked with the External Reference Group to develop a robust capping mechanism and used a consultant to facilitate the discussions. A copy of the consultant’s report is included within the impact assessment. The key features of implementing the cap are set out in table 5.

The Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group has met and developed information packs for HEIs and students. The Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group will be established.

Table 5: Key features

Cease payments to undergraduates in year 1. Pay to students on all other years
DH sets national number of bursary recipients split between undergraduates and postgraduates based on previous years’ intake and affordability. Over time, we will wish to expand this to include employer demand, and workforce intelligence.
The Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Group has been established to tell each HEI how many bursary funded places they will have each year split between undergraduates and postgraduates. In the longer term, the Group will take into account quality of courses, attrition, local employer demand, course closure etc. Further work on this is required.
DH (advised by the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Group) sets national high-level criteria to assist HEIs in short listing students for the bursary.
HEIs apply criteria to pool of eligible students to determine which students to forward to the National Health Service Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) to meet the existing national bursary criteria (based on residency, non-double public funding etc). HEIs should be able to build this into the student application process.
Students apply to NHSBSA.

NHSBSA assesses eligibility and payment rates, and pays students

A “Monitoring and Development Group” is established to monitor implementation, including number of applications for courses, course availability, wider changes to higher education, etc

The Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group has been established to advise the Department on how to allocate the national number of bursary recipients and the criteria for HEIs to use. The Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group will be established to review the impact of capping methodology on the social work education market and to advise on wider issues. These processes will ensure that the social work employers and HEIs are directly involved in determining the criteria and methodology for setting local caps as they have been in shaping these processes thus far. In summary, the process is as follows:

For students starting their course in the 2013 academic year:

- **Undergraduates**

No new undergraduates will receive a bursary in year 1 of study. HEIs will be informed of the undergraduate cap for bursary recipients in 2014 academic year by September 2013. HEIs will provide a shortlist of students who meet the inclusion criteria (including have passed their year 1 examinations and assessment of suitability for practice placements) to the NHS BSA. Shortlisted students will apply to the NHS BSA, who will determine eligibility under the existing eligibility criteria. NHS BSA will pay students direct.

- **Postgraduates**

Prospective students apply to HEIs for acceptance on a course. HEIs assess the application and determine whether to accept the application or not. The HEI will have been notified how many postgraduate students would receive a bursary. HEIs will forward a shortlist of potential bursary recipients to the NHS BSA by July 2013. Shortlisted students will apply to the NHS BSA, who will determine eligibility under the existing eligibility criteria. NHS BSA will pay students direct.

If students started their course in the 2012 academic year or earlier received a bursary, they will continue to receive a bursary on the same terms as currently until they complete their course or their circumstances change, which make them ineligible for a bursary. Students will apply direct to NHS BSA as currently – HEIs will not need to include these students on the shortlist because the Department has committed to fund all existing bursary recipients.

Students will have until from 1 May to 30 November 2013³ to apply for a bursary. The Department’s service level agreement with NHS BSA states that 99% of applications must be

³ For all 2013 academic year starters including January and April.

assessed within 20 working days. NHS BSA will liaise with students following receipt of the applications. HEIs may wish to encourage shortlisted students to apply. NHS BSA will confirm to HEIs in January which students have successfully applied for a bursary. Students will need to apply for the bursary annually.

The Department is being advised by the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group on how to divide the national cap into HEI allocations and the criteria for HEIs to use when shortlisting students. Although the guidance is not mandatory, the organisations represented on the Advisory Group will encourage all HEIs to use the criteria, which has been developed mainly by the HEI representatives, to ensure consistency and national transparency. HEIs will be encouraged to share good practice. A Monitoring Group is also being established to monitor the impact of the bursary reforms, the wider higher education market and social work supply and demand. The terms of reference and membership of these groups is set out in Annexes 3 and 4.

Information packs for students and HEIs have been published separately.

Setting the National Number of Bursary Recipients

For the 2013 Academic Year we are working to a budget of £73m. Ministers have agreed the figures of £73m and £65m for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years. This reflects the uncertainty over demand for social workers. In this context, we need to remember that of the approximately 80,000 registered social workers only 45,000 are working as social workers.

We have committed to funding existing students, including those starting in 2012 academic year, the existing bursary at the existing rates. Implementation of option 3 means funding existing students until they complete their course and

- in 2013/14, not having new recipients of the undergraduate bursary in year 1 and capping the new postgraduate intake.
- in 2014/15, we will have new undergraduate bursary recipients as well as new postgraduates

A model has been developed (described in the impact assessment) based on historical data and ranges of assumptions to generate upper and lower cost estimates against which the bursary scheme would be least and most affordable. The upper estimate combines the various assumptions that would generate the most expensive bursary scheme. The assumptions resulting in the greatest savings combine to form the lower estimate. The range in which expenditure can be expected to fall is influenced by three main unknown variables, against which upper and lower estimates have been modelled. These are:

- growth in enrolments;
- attrition⁴ rates; and

⁴ Attrition rates, in this instance, reflect the difference between the number of students enrolling on a social work qualification and the number of bursaries awarded in the same period. As such, it accounts for not only withdrawals from study, but also referrals and enrolling students who do not apply for bursary funding.

- changes in additions⁵ paid.

These factors combined to produce a range of estimates for each option. An estimate of the number of existing students and associated bursary and additions costs is in table 6 below.

Table 6: Estimate of Numbers and Cost of Existing Students⁶

	11/12		12/13		13/14	
	Numbers	£m	Numbers	£m	Numbers	£m
UG	10,900	46.5	9,400	43.5	5,900	27.2
PG	3,400	34.5	3,700	36.3	1,800	17.6
Total	14,300	81.0	13,100	79.8	7,700	44.8

Table 7 shows the funding for the new scheme once the cost of the existing bursary recipients have been taken into account.

Table 7: Estimate of funding available for new scheme

	2013/14	2014/15
Budget	£73.0m	£65.0m
Less the estimate of the cost of existing students	£44.8m	£13.7m
Leaves for the new scheme	£28.2m	£51.3m

Therefore, a budget of £73 million and £65 million in academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15 will allow a maximum of £28.2m and £51.3m for the new arrangements. This includes funding the basic bursary for undergraduates and postgraduates, the contribution to tuition fees and the additions to the postgraduate bursary. Using this model we have calculated how many bursaries are available within the financial envelope and deducted the forecast cost of existing students to generate an **indicative** number of new bursaries for the 2013 and 2014 academic years as follows:

⁵ Additions refer to additional funding awarded to eligible postgraduate students, much of which is means-tested. These include Childcare Allowance, Disabled Student Allowance, Parental Living Allowance, Adult Dependent Grant, Maintenance Loan and direct vendor payments to accommodate students with disabilities.

⁶ Information for 2012/13 onwards are the best estimates, taken from a range of values from scenario modelling – see impact assessment.

- 2013: 1,500 postgraduates
- 2014: 1,500 postgraduates and 2,500 undergraduates.

Please note that the 2014 numbers will be reviewed after confirmation of student numbers for the 2012 academic year and discussion with the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group.

Setting the Local Number of Bursary Recipients

Since the launch of the consultation, we have worked with the External Reference Group to devise a capping methodology. The process developed has the support of the External Reference Group and we are confident that it can be implemented for the 2013 academic year.

There is a range of options for distributing the of bursary recipients to HEIs. The Department discussed the range of factors and data that should be taken into account in devising the local cap with both the External Reference Group and Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group. They both advised the Department that for 2013 and 2014 a simple formula should be used to devise the local cap, which over time should be refined. The preferred option was to divide the national cap by the proportion of bursary recipients in each HEI based on an average of the previous three academic years. The group took the view that this data is available and reflects only those students who receive a bursary⁷. Secondly, it was considered that over time, the methodology would be reviewed and potentially additional layers of sophistication (e.g. quality of courses, local demand, etc) could be added. The proposed national cap for the 2014 academic year will be reviewed in light of experience and the new arrangements will be kept under review by the Monitoring and Development Group. Each year new entrants to and removals from the social work education market will need to be accommodated.

Next Steps

Effective communication is needed to ensure that all HEIs and prospective students are aware of these changes. The Department and the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group will provide information to HEIs and students on the way the new arrangements will work. The Department will work with the NHSBSA to implement the changes to the existing bursary procedures that will be required. The Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group will review the impact of the bursary reforms on the social work education market and the impact on supply and demand on an ongoing basis. The Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group will advise the Department annually on the distribution of the national number of bursary recipients and develop guidance to HEIs. The proposed national cap for the 2014 academic year will be reviewed in light of experience and the new arrangements will be kept under review by the Monitoring and Development Group.

⁷ Not all social work students receive a bursary. For example those on employment based courses

Annex 1: List of Respondents

The following organisations submitted responses to the consultation. We have not included the names of individual respondents in the list.

- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- Association of Directors of Children's' Services
- Birmingham University.
- Bradford College
- Brighton University
- British Association of Social Workers
- Bungalow
- Bury Local Authority
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Chester University
- City University Birmingham
- Combined response from Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee, Association of Professors of Social Work and Social Work Education Project in England.
- Darlington Council
- De Montford University.
- Derbyshire Council
- Devon County Council
- Durham County Council
- Durham University
- Goldsmiths College
- Greenwich University
- Health Professions Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Huddersfield University
- Leeds University
- Liverpool John Moores University
- London Borough of Sutton
- London Metropolitan University
- London South Bank University
- National Association of Student Money Advisors
- National Health Service Business Services Authority
- National Union of Students
- Nottingham City Council (2responses)
- Nottingham Trent University
- Nottingham Trent University (2 responses)
- Oxford Brookes University
- Plymouth University
- Rotherham MBC
- Royal Holloway University of London
- Ruskin College
- Salford University
- Sheffield Hallam University.

- Skills for Care
- The College of Social Work
- Universities UK
- University Campus Suffolk
- University of Bournemouth
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of East London.
- University of Leicester
- University of Lincoln
- University of Nottingham
- University of Sussex
- University of West England - Bristol
- Wandsworth LA (3 responses)
- Warwick University

Annex 2: The Announcement on 26 October 2012

New social work bursary details set out

Changes to the social work bursary are announced today to provide clarity to prospective students and higher education institutions.

Based on responses to a consultation earlier this year, the new arrangements, which take effect from the 2013 academic year, will:

- keep an undergraduate bursary for years 2 and 3 to support those unable to work part-time due to course commitments
- maintain the postgraduate bursary as it is to ensure a continuation of highly qualified graduates
- cap the number of undergraduate and post-graduate bursary recipients to ensure a sufficient supply of high quality students is maintained.

The reform recognises that social work students have to undertake 200 days of hands-on placements, which reduces their ability to take a part-time job. The placements take place in undergraduate years two and three and throughout the postgraduate course.

Care and Support Minister Norman Lamb said:

“These changes are designed to drive up care standards in the sector and will give employers a higher quality pool of candidates to choose from.

“The new bursary arrangements will mean that the Government will continue to support higher quality students who have more intention of working as a social worker.”

The bursary is being reformed to encourage the supply of high quality social workers in England. There is currently an oversupply of social workers and newly qualified social workers do not meet the needs of employers in terms of quality of performance. There is also evidence that not all social work students take up employment in social work or social care or actually finish their course.

The consultation laid out five different options for reform that were developed with the assistance of an external group, including representatives from social work employers, frontline social workers, higher education institutions, students, unions and service users.

Annex 3: The Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group

Role of the Group

1. To advise the Department of Health
2. To agree proposed criteria for local capping methodology;
3. To agree process and timetable
4. To advise on the methodology for determining the local cap of bursary recipients.

The group will need to take into account the following:

- Size of national cap;
- Number of courses;
- Split between full time and part time;
- Split between undergraduate and postgraduate;
- Provide “guidance” to HEIs;
- Quality of course provision;
- Attrition rates;
- employer demand (including workforce profile, split between children and families, mental health and adult); and
- Geographical spread.

Membership consists of the following organisations:

- Department of Health
- Department for Education
- National Health Service Business Services Authority
- Joint Universities Council-Social Work Education Committee
- Association of Professors of Social Work
- College of Social Work
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- Association of Directors of Children’s Services
- National Union of Students
- Universities UK
- An employer from the private and voluntary sector

Annex 4: The Social Work Bursary Monitoring and Development Group

Role of the group

The remit for this Group will be:

- To advise the Advisory Group
- To offer feedback on the outcomes of the capping system (overall process, student numbers, other relevant information)
- To suggest changes to the capping methodology for the following year (initially 2014)
- Monitoring of the actual expenditure against budget
- Receive, or specify and suggest the commission of, relevant workforce data. In addition, it may wish to request certain data in a refined format, e.g. from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) / Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)

Membership consists of the following organisations:

- Members of the Social Work Bursary Prioritisation Advisory Group⁸;
- Centre for Workforce Intelligence;
- 3 additional HEI representatives;
- Health and Social Care Information Centre;
- 3 student representatives⁹

⁸ see Annex 3.

⁹ 1 student nominated by the National Union of Students, 1 undergraduate student and 1 postgraduate student nominated by The College of Social Work.