



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

NHS Wales Bursary
Workforce Innovation, Workforce and Corporate Support Division
Welsh Government

By e-mail: nhsbursary@llyw.cymru

22/01/2026

Dear Colleague,

Consultation: considering future options for the NHS Wales bursary scheme

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the consultation above. Our response concentrates on the scheme in question in the context of the Welsh language.

Providing care through the medium of Welsh is an integral part of ensuring effective and quality care. The Welsh Government's *More Than Just Words* strategy underlines the principle of the Active Offer, namely that health and social care providers must actively offer services in Welsh, without the patient having to ask for them. An essential element of the success of this strategy is to ensure a health and care workforce with Welsh language skills.

The Welsh language standards place a range of duties on health boards in terms of providing bilingual services. Perhaps one of the most important standards in this context is standard 110 which places a duty on health boards to publish a plan for each 5-year period specifying the steps they will take in order to increase their capacity to carry out clinical consultations through the medium of Welsh. A key part of increasing this capacity is bilingual workforce planning. A number of other standards also relate specifically to workforce planning, including fostering the Welsh language skills of the workforce and promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language.

Much good work is already happening in this context. We know that Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) already includes the Welsh language as a criterion when commissioning professional education contracts in a number of health and care areas. The National Centre for Learning Welsh offers Work Welsh courses for health workers. At tertiary education level, with the help of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Welsh-medium

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provision has increased on health and care courses. Important support is offered to students with Welsh language skills through the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol scholarships, and to prospective students with Welsh language skills through the Tomorrow's Doctors and Tomorrow's Health Workers schemes.

The consultation document discusses the requirement for professional healthcare students who receive the NHS Wales Bursary to work in Wales for up to two years after graduation. Respondents are asked whether they agree with this requirement (Question 8). We support this condition. The consultation document also discusses the fact that medical and dental students who receive the NHS Wales Bursary do not have to commit to working in Wales after graduation. Respondents are asked whether they agree with this exemption (Question 9). We do not agree with this exemption. Rather, we believe that medical and dental students, as well as professional healthcare students, should work in Wales after graduation. This would increase the likelihood that Welsh speakers who have been trained in Wales, and possibly through the medium of Welsh, will join the workforce and provide a bilingual service to patients.

Our understanding is that the bursary in question is available for individuals studying in Wales, although these individuals may not come from Wales originally. Clearly, this is essential in order to attract a health workforce to Wales and to ensure better services for the people of Wales. Despite this, we would be interested to understand if there is more that could be done to encourage people from Wales, and Welsh speakers in particular, to take advantage of the bursary and to choose to study in the field of health and care in Wales. For example, it might be possible to draw attention to the wider support available to Welsh speakers through the Coleg Cymraeg scholarships, thereby ensuring that more Welsh speakers train to work in the health and care sector.

We should also note that we are aware of recent situations where students who have received the NHS bursary have been unable to get work placements following their training and have had to look for jobs outside of Wales. This, of course, jeopardizes the implementation of the requirement imposed on them in terms of their bursary and it is also a cause for concern for us that health workers who can speak Welsh are leaving Wales and therefore not available to provide services in the Welsh language. It should be ensured that such a situation does not arise again in the future.

It is vital to maintain the momentum of the positive steps in Welsh-medium training in the field of health and care in order to develop an increasingly bilingual workforce. One way of doing this is to offer a strong incentive to students trained in Wales, many of whom have Welsh language skills, to join the Welsh health and care workforce after graduation. This would build on the investment in Welsh-medium training and the bursary scheme itself.

I hope that the comments above will be of assistance to the consultation.



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Yours faithfully,

Efa Gruffudd Jones
Welsh Language Commissioner