



**GIG**  
CYMRU  
**NHS**  
WALES

Addysg a Gwella Iechyd  
Cymru (AaGIC)  
Health Education and  
Improvement Wales (HEIW)

## **NHS WALES BURSARY FOR HEALTHCARE GRADUATES.**

*Supporting healthcare students to train and work in Wales*

### **BRIEFING PAPER 2. SEPTEMBER 2021**

#### **Allied Health Professionals and Health Care Scientists Streamlining Improvements to approach based on 2021 evaluation**

##### **Introduction**

This briefing paper provides a summary of the feedback provided by students, Health Boards, Trusts, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) during the first streamlining for Allied Health Professional (AHPs) and Health Care Scientist (HCS) graduates in 2021. Overall, many of the challenges experienced and concerns raised were due to the condensed time scale within which this new and complex approach was implemented amidst significant and enduring disruption of the pandemic. Some Health Boards (HBs) encountered challenges to ensure there were sufficient vacancies for all graduates within the nationally set SSP timescale for applications and appointment. Taking on board evaluation feedback, HEIW and NWSSP have been able to reflect changes in the model and, in conjunction with Health Boards/Trusts, are commencing the planning stage to support the recruitment of newly qualified graduates in 2022. There will be an evaluation of the 2022 scheme summer of 2022.

##### **Outcome of AHP and HCS Streamlining 2021.**

The table below shows the outcome of graduates into employment through the streamlining process as of April 2021.

	<b>AHP/ HCS</b>
<b>Allocated Students</b>	381
<b>Unallocated</b>	19
<b>Total</b>	400
<b>% Allocation Rate</b>	<b>95%</b>

Source: NWSSP 2021

There were different success rates for Health Boards for some specific professions and overall streamlining was effective as a process for recruitment. Some regional challenges experienced prior to streamlining remain and may require further consideration in a wider context.

Students appreciated one application process although they would have benefitted with more consistent information earlier on in the autumn term. Despite initial reservations, recruitment and service managers found one application timeline beneficial. The contribution of value-based questions (VBQ) to the shortlisting process was welcomed, with suggestions how they could be improved through being specific to the professions. Students found recording their interview video challenging as this fell during placements. There was opportunity to improve the application to enable Students to better evidence their placement experiences.

Considerable efforts were made to accommodate the completion of the process by 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Despite this, some Health Boards reported their commitment to withhold advertising posts outside of Wales between 17<sup>th</sup> December and April 12<sup>th</sup> was problematic.

The Health Boards in the South East of Wales filled all vacancies. Many of the service leads from the smaller professions cited they were very happy with the quality of applicants and felt that this process had worked well. This was not universal, and the larger professions felt they had missed out on the opportunity to recruit new graduates from a wider field of applicants from outside of Wales. This perspective is acknowledged recognising the SSP methodology is restricted to new graduates who have trained in Wales; and is closely linked to the Welsh Government policy – the NHS Bursary scheme, which aims to support students who wish to commit to working in Wales for a specific period after the completion of their course.

Throughout the process all Health Board stakeholders highlighted the practical challenges of forward planning vacancies to correlate with workforce planning / education commissioning numbers previously submitted in 2018. In addition, the need to provide vacancies to employ these graduates at one time was challenging. Engagement with HBs/NHS Trusts continues to improve this alignment and the corresponding link to SSP.

The rapid implementation of the new system in the early part of 2021 did have an impact on communication with students in some programmes. This is a priority given the stresses already experienced by final year students and HEIs need to be supported to offer correct advice. The lack of available vacancies created anxiety for some students who wanted to ensure they would meet the Terms and Conditions of the NHS Bursary and secure employment in a timely manner.

The Terms and Conditions of the NHS Bursary, notably to secure employment in Wales for a minimum of 22.5hrs a week and on a permanent basis, resulted in requests to be released from the contract and the 18month/2yr tie-in.

## **Improvements for 2022. The next round.**

From the evaluation HEIW and NWSSP will continue with streamlining as the recruitment method for all 2022 graduates. A full evaluation will be undertaken in 2022 to see if improvements planned to the approach have been effective and have addressed the concerns raised via the evaluation.

## **Changes/ Adaptations**

- To improve coordination and engagement with Health Boards and NHS Trusts, LHB/ Trusts specific implementation groups will be established with membership determined locally. NWSSP and HEIW will work directly with workforce colleagues who are best placed to coordinate the recruitment and engage with professional colleagues within their own organisations.
- A jointly developed suite of communication material using a range of communication mediums will become available through the Autumn for students and stakeholders to use. An amended version of the Bursary Terms and Conditions Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has been produced and a series of briefing papers in the autumn will aid awareness and understanding.
- Roadshows and online Q and A sessions are also planned for the autumn for students, HEIs and NHS to supplement the briefing papers and communication material uploaded onto the NWSSP and HEIW webpages
- Taking on board feedback from professional leads, establish profession specific value-based questions will be developed where appropriate. HEIW and NWSSP are working collaboratively to incorporate this into the 2022 scheme. Professional leads are best placed to set these additional questions
- Podiatry and Audiology will be included into the next round of streamlining, providing parity with other professions.
- The evolving new role of Physician Associates requires more time to introduce and embed this role within Health Boards. It is advisable to continue and build on the success of the previous year by continuing with the current arrangements which will be evaluated in 2022.
- A comprehensive introductory pack has been developed to share with Health Board/Trust Delivery Groups including a clear pathway through streamlining with roles and responsibilities throughout
- Health Boards/Trusts will be encouraged to establish familiarisation sessions for students who undertake their placements in other organisations

## **Further information:**

NHS Bursary Terms and Conditions.

Bev Frowen: [HEIW.bursary@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:HEIW.bursary@wales.nhs.uk)