

Reforming the Social Work Bursary

A paper for consultation

Reforming the Social Work Bursary

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Reforming the Social Work Bursary

A paper for consultation

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Executive summary

Ensuring a good supply of high quality social workers is an important ambition for the government. This means recruiting high calibre students with the right skills, knowledge and aptitude from all sectors of the community. Social work can be a great career option which is both challenging and rewarding at the same time.

The social work bursary was originally introduced in 2003 to increase applicant numbers for degree level qualifications. Following the recommendation of the Social Work Taskforce, it now needs to be reviewed to ensure it continues to incentivise sufficient high quality candidates to come forward to study and work as social workers. At a time of financial pressures, we also need to ensure the funding for social work education delivers value for money. For these reasons – ensuring quality and achieving value for money – we have decided to consult on reforms to the Social Work bursary.

The aim of the social work bursary reform is to

- improve the overall quality of social work graduates;
- maintain a sufficient supply of high quality new entrants to the profession and support widening participation, and
- recognise the need to maximise value for money and target expenditure on high quality candidates.

In preparing this consultation, the Department of Health has discussed the range of possible options with representatives of the Social Work Reform Board and an External Reference Group.¹ Their involvement has been helpful in developing the five options for consultation.

The Government is consulting on the following options (laid out in more detail in chapter two.)

1	Introducing a means-tested Undergraduate and Postgraduate Bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary
2	Retaining the postgraduate bursary only with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.
3	Retaining the undergraduate bursary from the second year and the current postgraduate scheme with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.
4	End the bursary completely to reinvest in other social work education and training.
5	Create a new scheme based on successful completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

¹ Both of which included social work employers, frontline social workers, higher education representatives, students, unions, service users and carers.

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The aim is to introduce the reformed social work bursary in the 2013 academic year. Existing students, including those starting in academic year 2012, will remain on current schemes and will not be affected by this review.

This consultation is for the social work bursary in England only. Different arrangements apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Department would be grateful for your views on your preferred option. The deadline for responses is 5pm on 27 July 2012. The responses will be reviewed and a consultation response document published.

Introduction

The social work bursary was introduced to increase the number of degree level social workers in 2003. In its final report in 2009, the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) recognised that this aim had been achieved and asked the Government to review how the bursary could be used as a lever to further improve quality.² This bursary consultation is part of a wider context of reform led by the Social Work Reform Board's proposals to improve social work education and training.³

The Government's objectives therefore, for reforming the bursary are to:

- Further improve the quality of social work graduates, in line with the SWTF recommendation. 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.

In preparing this consultation, officials have discussed reform proposals with the Education Working Group of the Social Work Reform Board and a number of other stakeholders, including an External Reference Group. This engagement generated a number of reform options, which were later refined into five options for the purpose of this consultation. A literature review was also carried out by the Social Care Workforce Research Unit⁴.

The options have been developed in the context of the current Spending Review, and the announcements that the Chancellor made in Budget 2012 about the likely financial position over the next Spending Review. Pressures on funding across the health and social care sectors, and the public sector more generally, will mean that it is vital to ensure that public funding is being focused as effectively as possible, and that the funding solution for social work training is sustainable in the medium and long term.

Chapter 1 provides some background to enable consideration of the options for reforming the bursary. In particular, it explains the background to the review following the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force. It also puts the bursary in the context of wider Government support for social work education and training and considers supply and demand issues for social workers.

Chapter 2 sets out the five options we are consulting on. It provides a description of each option together with an initial view of costs, pros and cons.

Further information on the consultation process is included at Annex 1.

² http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/dh_098322

³ See chapter 1 or SWRB website: <http://www.education.gsi.gov.uk/swrb/educators>

⁴ see impact assessment

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Detail about the current social work bursary, including costs and numbers of bursary recipients, is included at Annex 2. Annex 3 provides information about other student support that is available with Annex 4 detailing specific bursary schemes for comparison. Annex 5 provides the initial views on each option against the evaluation criteria.

All responses to the consultation will be carefully considered. However, it would be helpful if you could respond to this consultation using the questions provided and on the form contained in Annex 6. The consultation invites you to identify which option you would support. The response to the consultation should be sent to swbursaryconsultation@dh.gsi.gov.uk or to:

Social Work Bursary Consultation
Department of Health
Room 2N14, Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7UE

The closing date for responses is 5pm Friday 27 July 2012. The responses will be reviewed and a consultation response document published, including an announcement on the proposed way forward. Before taking any decision, Ministers will need to be satisfied that the preferred option supports the objectives of improving quality, ensuring supply of high quality graduates and represent value for money.

Next Steps

The Department will be discussing the findings of the consultation with the external reference group. If ending the bursary is the preferred option following the consultation, we will need to consider (with the Department for Education) what arrangements we will put in place to ensure security of supply of high quality entrants to the profession. If retaining the bursary is the preferred option (1-3) following consultation, we will carry out further detailed stakeholder engagement on options for restricting and reducing the number of social work bursary recipients. In addition, if option 2 is the preferred option, we will carry out further detailed stakeholder engagement on the means-testing methodology.

The aim is to introduce the new arrangements in the 2013 academic year. Existing students, including those starting in academic year 2012, will remain on current schemes and will not be affected by this review.

Chapter 1 Background to the consultation

The Social Work Bursary was established in 2003 to coincide with the introduction of the new degree level qualifying programmes in social work. It was part of a package of initiatives designed to increase the number of applications to social work qualifying courses when the ratio of applicants to places was approaching 1:1. Vacancy and turnover rates were consistently high and it was felt appropriate to introduce financial incentives at this time to encourage people into the workforce.

The Social Work Taskforce recommendation

In 2009, the Social Work Taskforce (SWTF) recommended a review of the social work bursary to examine how it could be used as a lever to improve quality⁵. The SWTF concluded

‘The current bursary arrangements have been successful in encouraging increased numbers of applicants to social work courses. These incentives now need to be reviewed to promote applications from people of sufficiently high quality and to encourage completion of degree courses, entry to and retention in the workforce.’

The Social Work Reform Board proposals for improving education

In 2010, the SWRB also published proposals for implementing three Social Work Task Force (SWTF) recommendations:

- strengthen the calibre of entrants accepted to study on social work degree courses;
- review the content and delivery of the curriculum; and
- establish new arrangements for providing sufficient high quality placements that are properly supervised and assessed.

Together, the SWRB’s proposals should better prepare social work students to enter the workforce, develop more specialist learning through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), and continue their learning through a new continuing professional development (CPD) framework. The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) will be introduced in 2012 as the framework against which social workers’ plan their careers and professional development. The PCF sets out how a social worker’s knowledge, skills and capacity build over time. It will serve as a backdrop to both initial qualification and continuing professional development.

Government support to social work education and training

The social work bursary is part of the overall funding context for social work education and training, including funding for practice placements and NQSW/ASYE programmes (see below), which is provided in addition to the wider Government support for students in higher education. Students studying social work (at undergraduate level) are also eligible for other student support packages, including loans.

Changes have been made to higher education funding from 2012, which will come into force from the 2012 academic year⁶. These are summarised in Annex 3. Full time undergraduates will continue to be able to apply for student loans and non-repayable grants from Student

⁵ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/DH_098322

⁶ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education>

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Finance England in addition to the social work bursary. For the first time, part-time undergraduates can apply for a tuition loan.

In the 2011/12 financial year, the social work bursary cost approximately £80 million. (see Annex 2) This cost covers part payments to students studying in the academic years 2010 and 2011. At present, any student studying on a course leading to qualification as a social worker can apply for a bursary. Detailed eligibility criteria exist. It is a demand-led scheme with no upper limit on the number of students who receive a social work bursary. Undergraduates are able to receive a student loan and grants in addition to the social work bursary (see Annex 3.) For postgraduates, unless they are on an employment-based course, the bursary is their only access to public financial support⁷. The postgraduate bursary scheme includes allowances for childcare, disability and a maintenance grant.

The Government also provides funding (£29 million in the 2011/12 financial year) via the Education Support Grant. This is also a demand-led budget. It provides funding to:

- Practice placement providers recognising the additional cost of hosting a student;
- HEIs to recognise the additional administration costs involved; and
- HEIs to involve service users and carers in the development and delivery of the social work degree.

This support has been available to all students regardless of whether they took up employment in social work or whether they worked in adult services or children's services. Taken together, the bursary and the Education Support Grant cost approximately £112 million per year. Both the bursary and practice placements funding are paid irrespective of the ability of the individual student, the quality of the course, or subsequent intention to take up employment either as a social worker or within the social care sector.

The Government has also supported specific schemes aimed at attracting high quality candidates into specialist areas such as the Department for Education's Step Up to Social Work programme, which is aimed at postgraduate students.

In response to employer and student feedback that the transition from education to employment needed to be smoother, the Department of Health and the Department for Education have funded Skills for Care and the Children's Workforce Development Council respectively to provide programmes aimed at supporting newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) enter the world of work. These schemes have proved to be successful and are currently being developed by the Social Work Reform Board into a generic Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme.

Supply and demand for social workers

There is currently no national workforce planning model for social work, which would enable accurate information on supply and demand. We do know that there are a number of variables which will affect demand and supply including:

- The impact of the changes to higher education funding;
- The current economic situation;

⁷ Graduates could apply to banks for a professional Career Development Loan of up to £10,000.

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- The future role of social workers within personalised adult services;
- The diverse and changing nature of the employers of social workers - local authorities, private and voluntary sector organisations; and
- Lack of restriction on the number of courses available, and therefore no restriction on the overall number of students who study social work.

A number of other factors may also impact on supply and demand:

- Local Authorities are encouraged following the Munro Report to designate posts as Principal Social Workers to provide a professional lead for children's social workers.
- The College of Social Work is working with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) to define the role of social work in adult services;
- The Centre for Workforce Intelligence is rolling out a supply and demand model that will help individual employers carry out workforce planning;
- Higher education funding changes are being evaluated; and
- The Government is to recruit a Chief Social Worker to advise on these issues.

The overall calibre of entrants to social work education and thereafter the profession remains a significant concern among employers, as does the rigour and relevance of initial social work education. The Department for Education advise that there is an undersupply of children's social workers and we need to ensure that any future changes to the bursary do not reduce the supply.

Employer preference in recruitment

Stakeholders have told the Department that employer preference in recruitment varies. Some employers prefer to recruit experienced social workers rather than newly qualified social workers and other specifically prefer postgraduate or more mature students.

Student profiles

The literature review found:

'Social workers have a different profile from students on other undergraduate programmes, with higher proportions of women, mature students, and students from minority ethnic groups. Socio-demographic data, albeit imperfect, suggests that a higher proportion of social work students come from semi routine and routine socio-demographic backgrounds. Consistent with their age profile, over a third of students are caring for school age children and almost half of all first year students report family or other unpaid caring responsibilities. These differences mean that their needs for financial support may differ from the majority of undergraduate and postgraduate students.'⁸

Equalities

In reviewing the Social Work bursary, the Department is keen to:

- increase the participation of groups that are currently under-represented in the workforce, including men and people with disabilities;
- operate an option that does not discourage people from different groups from choosing to study for a social work degree;
- help mitigate any financial barriers to people who have caring responsibilities;

⁸ See impact assessment

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- encourage a diverse range of students, particularly men and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds; and
- Consider the impact that each of the options may have on a particular group.

Conclusion

The Department's aim is to ensure the security of supply of high quality entrants to the social work profession and to ensure value for money from Government investment in the social work profession. We would like you to think about these issues in considering the options in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Options for Reforming the Social Work Bursary

This chapter sets out the options that are being consulted on, together with an initial assessment of pros, cons and costs and our initial thinking against the evaluation criteria. This chapter is structured as follows:

Section 1 sets out the questions that we would like you to consider in looking at the options.

Section 2 shows the evaluation criteria used to shortlist the options.

Section 3 sets out each of the five options with an initial assessment of pros and cons. Comments on each option against the evaluation criteria is set out Annex 4.

Section 4 sets out the Department's view of the options against the evaluation criteria.

Section 5 provides information on the costs of each option, including restricting the number of bursary recipients.

The impact assessment provides further detail on the costs of the changes with the analytical methodology and evidence from the literature review.

Section 1: Consultation Questions

The Government objectives for reforming the bursary are to:

- Further improve the quality of social work graduates, in line with the SWTF recommendation. This includes consideration of attrition rates and enhanced future employment prospects;
- maintain a sufficient supply of high quality graduates and widen participation;
- 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.

The questions we would like you to respond to are:

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 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 for 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?

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The options you are being asked to consider are:

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

Section 2: Evaluation Criteria

We developed the following evaluation criteria with the Social Work Reform Board and used it to shortlist the fifteen options generated to the five that are being consulted on⁹. Each of the five options meets the criteria below with the effect on security of supply being unknown and retaining the bursary reducing flexibility. The Department's scores were based upon discussion of the issues in the previous chapter with the external reference group. The scores for the fifteen options are set out in the impact assessment. The initial scoring against the evaluation criteria is shown after the initial assessment of costs, pros and cons of the five options. More detail is in Annex 4.

Title	Description
Legally compliant	The options are lawful in accordance with the relevant legislation; case law and general principles of administrative law
No adverse impact on equality	The options take into account their equality and diversity impacts, particularly race, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, transgender, pregnancy and maternity, carers and religion or belief issues, The socio-economic impacts of the options are also considered.
Security of supply	Maintains supply of entrants to the social work profession.
Quality of entrants to the profession	Quality of entrants to the profession is improved
Fair	The proposals provide a reasonable level of support to achieve a work/life balance.
Value for Money	The proposals provide value for money.
Affordable	The options are affordable within the current spending review settlement and reduce expenditure from the current level ¹⁰ .
Administration	The costs of implementing and administering the options do not cost more than currently. The scheme is robust, workable and simple to administer.
Widens participation	The options encourage those from a wide range of backgrounds to apply to promote greater equality in the areas identified above.
Flexible	The options are flexible enough to take into account planning for workforce changes, for example, whether the scheme has the potential to be focussed on either a particular location or specialism.

⁹ Membership of the SWRB Education Working Group and the External Reference Group are set out in Annex A. They both include representatives of social work employers, academics, trade unions and front line social workers and students,

¹⁰ current levels of expenditure are set out in annex 2.

Section 3: The options for reforming the bursary

Option 1: Introduce a tapered means-tested undergraduate and postgraduate bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary

Description: The maintenance grant and other additional allowances of the postgraduate bursary is currently means- tested. This option would extend means testing to the totality of the postgraduate bursary and introduce means testing for the undergraduate bursary. The standard bursary will be replaced by a tapered bursary, in which the rate of the bursary payable to an individual will be linked to means-testing. A cap on the number of students would be set linked to demand evidence for qualified social workers¹¹.

Costs: Costs would reduce if the cap on the number of students was set lower than the current levels of social work student intake. Final figures would also depend on the means-testing regime and student level of income. There are a range of methodologies that could be used, including the means testing criteria used for postgraduate students and the one used for the NHS bursary scheme.¹² For postgraduates the values of the basic grant and maintenance grant will be combined to form one element. For undergraduates, we currently do not have the data to create the system of income and disregards. We will discuss the means-testing regime with the external reference group.

Indicative payment to new students: The maximum rate payable would be the same rate as currently (see annex 2). The principle of means testing would mean that those students from lower socio-economic groups would receive a higher payment. The level of payment will be tapered to students from lower socio-economic groups. We have modelled three options for the average amount of bursary each student could expect to receive under a means-tested system: 50%, 75%, and 83.5% of the current rate¹³.

Pros:

- This option remains an enabler for lower social-economic groups.
- It would encourage widening participation as it would offer financial support to those students with the lowest income.
- It would reduce the overall cost of the bursary while ensuring that both eligible undergraduate and postgraduate students continue to receive some financial support. It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course.

Cons:

- It may deter some potential applicants who might otherwise make excellent social workers.
- It does not address the SWTF recommendation to the bursary as a lever to improve quality.
- There is no evidence that this system would reduce attrition rates and increase employability of graduates.
- There may be an increase in the cost of administering the bursary.

¹¹ We will be discussing this further with the external reference group.

¹² More detail on these is available in the application packs on the NHS Business Services Authority's website. <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/816.aspx>

¹³ average of 83.5% payment is based on analysis of postgraduate maintenance loans in 2010/11, which are currently means tested

Option 2: Only retain the postgraduate bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary

Description: only postgraduate students would be eligible to claim a social work bursary. Undergraduate students studying would not be eligible for a social work bursary but would remain eligible for funding from other student finance routes. A cap on the number of students who would receive a postgraduate bursary would be set, linked to evidence of demand for qualified social workers.¹⁴

Costs: Costs would reduce because undergraduates studying social work would no longer be offered a bursary. The number of postgraduates in receipt of a bursary would be capped.

Indicative payment to new students: Rate as currently paid (see annex 2).

Pros:

- Value for money would be improved, as postgraduates are more likely to take up employment as a social worker.
- Postgraduate students do not have access to other funding routes for study and if there was, no financial support may be deterred from study¹⁵.
- It may bias the profession towards postgraduate entry level.
- This option could result in a higher proportion of students undertaking the postgraduate route to becoming a social worker and thereby increasing the quality of outcomes.
- It would reduce the overall cost of the bursary while offering an incentive for graduates to consider becoming a social worker.

Cons:

- This option could reduce the numbers of social work undergraduates qualifying each year as students may choose to take an undergraduate degree in a different subject, thereby reducing supply.
- There is a lack of certainty about the effect on supply of applicants to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses - it may bias the profession towards postgraduate entry level.
- The funding differences between postgraduate and undergraduate routes may affect equality issues (though differences exist already with means testing for postgraduates).
- It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course.

¹⁴ We will be discussing this further with the external reference group.

¹⁵ Postgraduates are not eligible for a student loan or grants. Students on employment based courses or with support from an employer are not eligible for a bursary

Option 3: Retain undergraduate bursary from the second year and current postgraduate scheme remains as now with a cap on the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students who receive a bursary

Description: Postgraduate students would continue to be eligible to claim a social work bursary under existing arrangements. Students studying on an undergraduate route would become eligible for a social work bursary after the first year if they meet the assessed threshold for ‘readiness to practice’¹⁶. Undergraduates would remain eligible for funding from other routes as currently. A cap on the number of students would be set linked to evidence of demand for qualified social workers¹⁷.

Costs: Savings would occur from the 2013/14 academic year, as no bursaries would be paid to Year 1 undergraduates. Costs associated with the assessment for “readiness to practice” would be covered by university-based systems.

Indicative payment to new students: Rates as currently paid (see annex 2).

Pros:

- This option offers an opportunity to link the bursary to quality and achievement through the link to the formal assessment stage.
- It offers an opportunity for employers/partners to participate in bursary decisions, as they will be expected to participate in ‘readiness for practice’ assessments.
- It retains the bursary as an enabler for lower income students but with no funding in year one for undergraduates.
- It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course.
- While not necessarily offering improvements to recruitment/retention, it will reduce the impact of debt for social work graduates entering the profession compared with other graduates.
- It separates the bursary from automatic entitlement on entry to course.

Cons:

- The option removes financial support during first year of qualifying education at undergraduate level and may lead to a reduction in the numbers of applicants choosing to study social work.
- HEIs may reduce the number of programmes at undergraduate level, leading to a reduction in the number of degree level social workers qualifying each year.
- The funding differences between postgraduate and undergraduate routes may affect equality issues (though differences exist already with means testing for postgraduates).

¹⁶ a requirement for all social work courses before students are permitted to go on to placement

¹⁷ We will be discussing this further with the external reference group.

Option 4: End the social work bursary completely and reinvest in replacement schemes

Description: This option would see the ending of bursaries for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Undergraduates would remain eligible for a student loan as now and existing students, including those starting in the 2012 academic year, would continue to receive a bursary at the existing rates until the completion of their current course.

Currently, all students receive a contribution within their basic bursary grant to help with the travel costs for practice placement costs¹⁸. If the bursary were to end, we would seek an alternative mechanism to fund the travel costs to placements.

Resources could be made available for re-investment in other social work education, training or recruitment initiatives to improve the quality of social work, such as specific entry pathway schemes or return to practice schemes (targeted at qualified social workers who currently do not work as social workers). Such schemes would need to fall within Section 67 of the Care Standards Act.

Costs: Under this option, significant savings could occur from the 2013/14 academic year, dependant on other options for investment in improving quality. The administration costs associated with this option will reduce as the number of those receiving bursaries falls.

Illustrative payment per student: Placement travel costs as now (£1,725 over the lifetime of the course) - dependant on other schemes being introduced.

Pros:

- There would be flexibility to implement a greater variety of incentives to enter the profession that could target specialities or geographical areas.
- Investment could be targeted at return to practice schemes rather than training students.
- It offers the greatest potential for savings.

Cons:

- It could lead to a drop in applications for social work programmes or an increase in withdrawals, which may lead to a shortage of supply.
- The lack of financial assistance may deter those from lower socio-economic backgrounds applying, making it more difficult to ensure a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.
- There is no evidence that this option would improve attrition rates, take-up or employment.

¹⁸ See annex 2.

Option 5: Create a new scheme based on the successful completion of the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE)

Description: This option would support those students who graduate through an undergraduate or postgraduate course, take employment as a social worker and successfully complete the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme. It offers a one-off payment to individuals. This option offers support to new social workers entering the workforce. Employers would be incentivised to participate in the ASYE programme as newly qualified social workers may choose not to work for employers who do not offer the ASYE programme¹⁹. The effect would be that newly qualified social workers would have additional support and learning time during working hours and would encourage Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) and if this option is selected, we will need to develop the details of how the scheme would work, including rates, eligibility criteria, and the application process. The first payments under this scheme would be from 2015/16n. We will need to review whether payment linked to the SWRB's ASYE programme falls within Section 67 of the Care Standards Act. Our initial thinking is that it does as it contains elements on education, training and assessment.

Costs: Costs would vary depending on the rate chosen and would be set within available resources. They would be less than the current bursary as the number of recipients per year would be reduced to one cohort.

Indicative payment to new students: Two options have been modelled: £5,000 or £7,000 per annum per student. Note that this figure is purely illustrative and options for payment levels will be considered after the consultation closes.

Pros:

- It has the potential to be used flexibly when managing the workforce as it could be adjusted to take advantage of labour shortages in different parts of the country or different areas of social work practice by using differential rates of payment.
- It will create savings by reducing the number of recipients to approximately 5,000 students per financial year.
- It provides encouragement for graduates to work as registered social workers.
- The incentive to train as a social worker and enter employment would remain about vocation.
- Employers would be able to provide financial support to students without affecting eligibility for a bursary.
- It encourages new social workers to complete training and stay with their placement employer.

Cons:

- It may not create incentive for quality students to select this career path - experience from similar awards in other professions (such as teaching) have not seen a significant impact on recruitment.
- The level of debt for social work students would increase.
- It may deter some potential applicants who might otherwise make excellent social workers.
- It is unknown how many employers will take up the ASYE programme as it is not mandatory and details of the programme, including financial support, have not been finalised.
- 25% of the payment may be payable in tax and national insurance (NI) - bursaries are seen as a grant and one-off payments such as suggested by this option are not seen as a grant.

¹⁹ The SWRB's ASYE programme is due to commence in September 2012.

Section 4: Initial assessment of the five options

This section sets out the Department’s view of the options against the evaluation criteria based on discussions with the external reference group. Your views are sought on these views. Annex 5 provides more detailed comments on each of the options. We will not be using these criteria in deciding which option to implement. The criteria we will use are those set out in the consultation questions and are the effect on:

- improving quality;
- security of supply; and
- value for money.

Criteria	Option				
	1	2	3	4	5
Legally Compliant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	Yes (note 1)
No adverse impact on equality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Security of supply	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Quality of entrants to the profession	No	Yes	Yes	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	No
Fair	Yes	Depends on criteria	Yes	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	Depends on rate
Value for money	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Affordable	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
administration	no	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Widens participation	Yes	No	No	No	No
Flexible	No	No	No	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	Yes

Note1: The SWRB proposal for an ASYE programme contains an element of education, training and assessment. We will need to review this when ASYE is implemented.

Section 5: Costs of the policy options

Following the consultation, the Government will need to consider views on the most effective way of supporting Social Work students to improve quality, while ensuring the arrangements are affordable and sustainable within the current economic context.

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The options have been developed in the context of the current Spending Review, and the announcements that the Chancellor made in Budget 2012 about the likely financial position over the next Spending Review. Pressures on funding across the health and social care sectors, and the public sector more generally, will mean that it is vital to ensure that public funding is being focused as effectively as possible, and that the funding solution for social work training is sustainable in the medium and long term.

All the options in this consultation meet the criteria of reducing expenditure. The cost of each option will be determined by the way in which the policy options are implemented (including the effect on administration costs). The following table shows an illustrative cost of each option. Midpoint costs and ranges are given to help inform consideration of the options.

Policy Option	Likely midpoint (note 1)	Predicted Range (note 2)
Introduce a means-tested Undergraduate and Postgraduate Bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.	£67m	£50m - £84m
Retain the postgraduate bursary only with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary.	£56m	£48m - £64m
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.	£74m	£65m - £83m
End the bursary completely to reinvest in other social work training (note 3).	£10m	n/a
Create a new scheme based on successful completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (£5,000 payment)	£54m	n/a
Create a new scheme based on successful completion of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (£7,000 payment)	£64m	n/a

Note 1: Likely midpoint estimated as average of predicted annual costs between 2016/17 and 2021/22 once all options have become fully realised and operational. Transitional arrangements and costs are excluded. Takes average of all considered capping options and scenarios, but excludes "no cap" options as if the bursary is retained, there will be a limit on the number of bursary recipients.

Note 2: Predicted range illustrates the cheapest and most expensive cap/scenario combination.

Note 3: At this stage, we intend to continue to fund travel expenses incurred while attending practice placements, thus all costings incorporate this expenditure for all students (regardless of bursary eligibility).

Assumptions have been made about the

- Level of cap on bursary recipients;
- Possible scenarios under each option;
- Estimates of number of students;
- Estimate of number of bursary recipients;
- Split between postgraduate and undergraduate;
- Projected rates of growth of student numbers; and

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- Level of payments to students.

These assumptions have produced a number of different models and, more than one cost per policy option. This is set out within the impact assessment, alongside details of the costing methodology applied.

To reduce and to control expenditure, the Department will reduce the number of bursary recipients. The social work bursary is demand led and has overspent in recent years (see Annex 2). Of the five options, options 1, 2 and 3 will include capping the number of bursary recipients, while options 4 and 5 will not. There are a number of options for how the cap on the number of bursary recipients should be applied:

- locally determined with HEIs having a role in determining which students receive a bursary within a national cap set by the Department;
- centrally determined with the Department setting a national cap, or
- through the bursary administrator and the NHS Business Services Authority assess eligibility for bursary and whether students are within the cap. The level of the cap would be set by the Department.

Your views are sought on the following issues, which the Department will discuss with the external reference group:

- how many bursary recipients there should be;
- the split between undergraduate and postgraduate students,
- whether this is a national cap or whether it is regional; or
- what criteria should be applied to the cap.

If the bursary is retained, we will discuss these issues with the external reference group. The Department will also review the existing eligibility criteria and the rates that are paid out. Some members of the external reference group favoured a smaller payment than currently to a large number of recipients and others favouring a larger payment to a smaller number of students. There is no specific evidence for this and is ultimately about personal preferences. We would be grateful for your views on this point.

Next Steps

We will analyse the responses to the consultation and discuss the findings with the external reference group. We will not consult formally on the principles of means-testing or capping (other than seeking views in this document) as these will restrict the time available to prepare for implementation in the 2013 academic year. Instead, we will discuss these issues with the external reference group, taking into account comments received during the consultation. If you wish to submit comments on capping or means-testing, please do so on the consultation response form.

Following discussion with the external reference group, the Department will make an announcement on the way forward and will publish a consultation response document and updated impact assessment.

Conclusion

Cost and the potential scope for reducing the current levels of expenditure is not the only reason for reforming the bursary. The other reasons are the need to address quality and the commitment to work as a social worker. The consultation questions have been designed for you to be able to give feedback about the impact of the options on supply and demand, quality and costs as well as equalities.

Annex 1: Further information on the consultation

Organisations represented on the SWRB's Education Working Group

Association of Directors of Children's Services
Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
APSW
British Association of Social Work
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service,
Children's Workforce Development Council
Department of Business Innovation and Skills,
Department of Education
General Social Care Council,
Higher Education Academy -Social Policy and Social Work
Joint Social Work Unit
Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee,
Learn to Care,
National Organisation of Practice Teaching
Quality Assurance Agency
Service users and carers involved in Social Work education,
Skills for Care
Social Care Institute for Excellence
Student reps
Social Care Workforce Research Unit
Universities UK

Organisations represented on the External Reference Group

Association of Directors of Children's Services
Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee,
Higher Education Academy -Social Policy and Social Work
National Union of Students
Universities UK

Equality and diversity

It is essential that any bursary scheme does not create unnecessary barriers to people with the right skills to enter the social work profession, particularly from those groups that are currently under-represented within the workforce, including men and people with disabilities. In reviewing the Social Work Bursary and making recommendations to Ministers, the Department is keen to:

- increase the participation of groups that are currently under-represented in the workforce;
- choose an option that does not discourage people from different groups from choosing to study for a social work degree;
- help mitigate any financial barriers to people who have caring responsibilities;

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- encourage a diverse range of students, particularly men and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds; and
- consider the impact that each of the options may have on a particular group.

Since April 2011, public sector bodies, including the Department of Health, have been required to comply with the public sector Equality Duty. The duty applies to any decision made, any policy developed, any programme implemented, and any practices driving activity. It also applies to functions and services provided by others on behalf of DH. To comply with the duty, the Department must demonstrate how it has paid due regard to the three aims of the Equality Duty, which are:

- the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not;
- promote good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The new Equality Duty replaced three sets of equality duties - for race, disability and gender - and covers the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, and carers 'by association' with people sharing some of the characteristics.

Some of the options set out in this consultation may meet the aims of the Department better than others. However, there are many factors that influence whether a person chooses to study social work and, according to the literature review, the bursary is not the only motivation for choosing a career in this field.

The code of practice applying to consultation

The consultation follows the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation, in particular:

- To consult at a stage when there is scope to influence policy outcome;
- To consult for at least 12 weeks, with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible;
- To ensure that the consultation documents are clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposal;
- To ensure that the consultation exercise is accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the consultation is expected to reach;
- To keep the burden of the consultation to a minimum so that the consultation is effective and consultees' buy-in is obtained;
- To carefully analyse responses and give clear feedback to participants following the consultation; and

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- To provide guidance to officials in how to run an effective consultation and share what they have learned from the experience.

The full text of the Code of Practice is available from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills²⁰.

Confidentiality of Information

We will manage all the information you provide in response to this consultation in accordance with the Department of Health's Information Charter.

Information we receive, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998(DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want the information that you provide us with to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals with, among other things, confidentiality obligations. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information, you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that the confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, in itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in most circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Summary of the consultation

A summary of the response to this consultation will be available at the end of the live consultation period and will be placed on the Department's consultation website at:
www.dh.gov.uk/en/consultations/responsestoconsultations/index.htm

Concerns about or comments on the consultation process

²⁰ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/betterregulation>

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The address for responses to the consultation is set out on page 8. This is the address to which responses to the issues raised by the consultation should be sent. Should you have concerns or comments that you would like to make about the consultation process itself please contact:

The Consultation Co-ordinator
Department of Health
3E48 Quarry house
Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7UE

Email: consultations@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Annex 2: The current Social Work Bursary

Section 67 of the Care Standards Act 2000 provides powers for the Secretary of State to ‘make grants, and pay travelling and other allowances, to persons resident in England and Wales, in order to secure their training in the work of social care workers’.

Numbers of Bursary Recipients

The number of bursary recipients from the 2006/07 to 2010/11 academic year is shown below. Note the numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates are the total number of undergraduate and postgraduates who received a bursary in that particular year. The figures below do not show the number of new starters.

Table 2.1: Social Work Bursary Undergraduate Scheme

Numbers of students in payment		
Academic Year	UG Basic Bursary	UG Tuition fees
2006/07	8,582	5,189
2007/08	9,371	3,005
2008/09	9,891	682
2009/10	10,164	264
2010/11	10,263	199

Table 2.2 Social Work Bursary Postgraduate Scheme

Academic Year	Numbers of students in payment						
	Basic Bursary	Maintenance Grant	Parent Learning Allowance	Additional Dependants Grant	Childcare	Disabled Students Allowance	Tuition Fees
2006/07	2,082	2,040	288	57	135	93	1,986
2007/08	2,372	2,344	324	73	139	181	2,280
2008/09	2,617	2,549	362	94	158	215	2,453
2009/10	2,744	2,580	435	98	202	237	2,533
2010/11	3,060	2,875	511	113	239	261	2,870

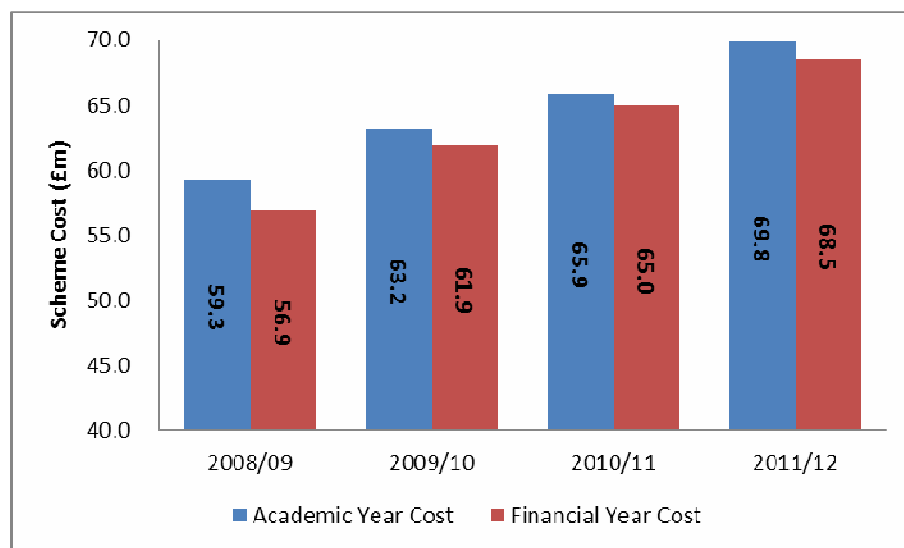
Source: NHS Business Services Authority

Costs of the bursary

Academic years start in September and financial years start in April. The cost to Government of the social work bursary is therefore different in an academic year as opposed to a financial year. The social work bursary is paid in three instalments, one per term.

In England, the Government spent approximately £69.8m in the academic year 2011/2012 on providing bursaries and allowances to approximately 15,500 students. The following chart sets expenditure on the bursary in financial years. The chart includes direct payments to students but not allocations to vendors and tuition fee contributions to HEIs.

Table 2.3: Cost of the bursary



Eligibility for a social work bursary

The Social Work Bursary has clear rules on who is eligible to apply for a bursary²¹. The eligibility criteria are not part of this review. However, if the outcome of this consultation is that the existing bursary is retained, the Department will need to consider both the level of support provided, including capping the tuition fee contribution, and the eligibility criteria.

Under current rules, students pay back the social work bursary if they do not complete their social work course.

²¹ <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students/825.aspx>

Tuition Fees

Currently, undergraduate students who are subject to variable tuition fees are responsible for paying their own fees²². Students can choose to use the bursary towards tuition fees or apply for a loan from Student Finance England. Undergraduate students who are not subject to variable tuition fees and all postgraduate students have their fees paid in full directly to the relevant Higher Education Institution.

Practice placement travel costs

All students receive a contribution within their basic bursary grant to help with the travel costs for practice placements. Undergraduates receive £575 per year and postgraduates receive £862.50 per year totalling £1,725 for the duration of the course for both postgraduates and undergraduates as the number of practice placement days required to qualify as a social worker is the same for undergraduates and postgraduates²³. It is worth noting that many students have said that because of the time commitment for practice placements, they are unable to take-up part employment to provide additional finances.

From the 2012 academic year, the SWRB changes to social work programmes mean that all students will undertake 2 practice placements of 70 and 100 days, alongside 30 practice/skills development days.

Table 2.4 Maximum support available in the 2011 academic year to undergraduates from the social work bursary

	London	Outside London
Full time students subject to Variable Tuition Fees (VTF)	Up to £4,975	Up to £4,575
Full time students not subject to Variable Tuition Fees (VTF)	Up to £3,475	Up to £3,075
Part time students subject to Variable Tuition Fees (VTF)	Up to £4,975 pro rata over length of course	Up to £4,575 pro rata over length of course
Part time students not subject to Variable Tuition Fees (VTF)	Up to £3,475 pro rata over length of course	Up to £3,075 pro rata over length of course

²² There are only a small number of students on variable tuition fees in the 2010/11 Academic year. A different tuition fee regime will apply from the 2012 academic year.

²³ Currently 200 days. However, the Social Work Reform Board has proposed that this is reduced to 170 practice placement days plus 30 days skills development from academic year 2012

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Note 1: undergraduate social work bursary is non-income assessed

Note 2: if students are not subject to VTF, £1,345 is paid directly to the HEI

Note 3: the grants includes a notional £575 towards travel costs for practice learning placements

Postgraduate allowances and expenses

Postgraduate students are not eligible for support from the Student Finance England. As part of the social work bursary postgraduate scheme, students can apply for additional financial support to reflect a limited number of personal responsibilities. These allowances are a reimbursement of costs, not an addition to disposable income. Allowances and expenses are paid to:

- students with children who are looked after in registered childcare and are not eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit - childcare allowance;
- students with adults and children who are wholly or mainly financially dependent on them - dependents' allowance and parents' learning allowance;
- students who need help with their living expenses - the maintenance grant; and
- students with disabilities who need extra help or equipment - disabled student allowance.

The above are means-tested, apart from the disabled students' allowance.

Table 2.5 Maximum support available in the 2011 academic year to postgraduates from the social work bursary

Course		London	Outside London	Tuition fees (note 2)
Non Income Assessed				
Basic Grant (note 1)	Full-time	£3,762.50	£3,362.50	£3,466
Basic Grant (note 1)	Part-time			£1,733
Disabled Student Allowance	Non-medical helpers Full-time	£20,520	£20,520	
	Non-medical helpers Part-time	£15,390	£15,390	
	Specialist equipment	up to £5,161	up to £5161	
	General equipment Full-time	£1,724	£1724	
	General equipment Part- time	£1,293	£1,293	
Income - Assessed				
Maintenance Grant		£4,026	£2,608	
Adult dependents Allowance		£2,642	£2,642	
Parents Learning Allowance		£1,508	£1,508	
Childcare Allowance	One Child	£148.75 per week	£148.75 per week	
	Two or more	£255 per week	£255 per week	

Note 1: the grants includes a notional £862.50 towards travel costs for Practice Learning Placements

Note 2: paid direct to HEI

Annex 3: Other support available to social work students

Aside from the bursary, financial support is available to both full and part-time students. There is no support other than the social work bursary available to postgraduate students from the Government. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills provides a package of support to eligible new undergraduates. Students apply for the package via Student Finance England²⁴.

The package of support for full-time students in England includes repayable student loans and means-tested non-repayable maintenance and supplementary grants²⁵. Supplementary grants include parent learner allowances, childcare and adult dependents grants.

Those students with a registered disability are able to access a range of allowances to help them to access higher education for example, funding for a medical helper or for specialist equipment.

From 2012/13 eligible full and part-time students can apply for a tuition fee loan of up to £9000 per annum to cover the cost of their tuition fee.

Eligible full-time students also have access to a maintenance loan, which is means-tested in part. This is available to help with living costs such as food, accommodation and travel.

Student loans attract interest that accumulates during the period of study and continues to accrue until the loans are paid off or written off after thirty years. Both tuition and maintenance loans have to be repaid. Students will not repay their loans until they are earning in excess of £21k per annum. Repayments are made at a rate of 9% on all earnings in excess of £21k. Loan repayments are usually deducted from the graduates' salary via the tax system.

Full-time students from households with an income of up to £25k have access to a full non-repayable maintenance grant of £3,250 and for those from a household with an income of up to £42,600, access to a partial maintenance grant.

Full-time students who hold an honours degree and go onto study for an undergraduate degree in social work are exceptionally eligible for a maintenance loan and supplementary grants.

Students on employment-based courses

Students are not eligible for a bursary if they are studying on an employment-based course, including Open University courses, regardless of whether a social care employer is supporting them. This applies to all students who have applied for a bursary for the first time since the 2004-05 academic year. The literature review found evidence that students on employment-based routes have better progression rates than other students²⁶. This may not simply be attributable to

²⁴ http://www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk/portal/pase.?pageid=153,46801198&_dad=portal&-schema=PORTAL

²⁵ Other arrangements apply to those who live in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

²⁶ See impact assessment

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better financial support and job security but may also relate to differing personal characteristics, such as increased motivation and familiarity with the work social workers do. However, students on employment-based routes are less ethnically diverse and less likely to have a disability. Importantly, there is no information on the cost effectiveness of employment based versus college-based routes.

Students who are supported by their employer to undertake the social work degree are not eligible for a bursary.

These arrangements will continue and are not part of the scope of this review.

Annex 4: Other available bursaries

This annex sets out a list of other bursaries together with a link to the relevant website.

- A. **NHS²⁷**: To be eligible to apply for NHS financial support, you must be accepted for an NHS funded place on a full or part-time course that leads to professional registration as a:
- doctor or dentist (you will be eligible for an NHS Bursary during the latter stages of your pre-registration training);
 - chiropodist (including podiatrist), dietician, occupational therapist, orthoptist, physiotherapist, prosthetist, and orthotist, radiographer, audiologist or a speech and language therapist;
 - dental hygienist or dental therapist;
 - nurse, midwife or operating department practitioner (degree course);
 - nurse, midwife or operating department practitioner (diploma course).
- B. **Teaching²⁸**: bursaries are available to postgraduates and a different rate is payable dependent on the subject. 'Golden Hellos' are payable for secondary education in certain subjects.
- C. **Town Planning²¹**: Bursaries are available from the Economic and Social Research Council.
- D. **Social Work in Wales²²**
- E. **Social Work in Scotland²³**
- F. **Social Work in Northern Ireland²⁴**

²⁷ <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/816.aspx>

²⁸ <http://www.tda.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/funding/training-in-england.aspx>

Annex 5: comments on evaluation criteria

These comments are set out to provide an indication of the Department’s views on each of the options based on the literature review and discussions with the SWRB and external reference group. They will not be used in the determining the preferred option after the consultation.

Option 1: Introduce a tapered means-tested undergraduate and postgraduate bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary

Title	Yes/No	Comment
Legally compliant	Yes	Within current legislation
No adverse impact on equality	Not known	Will need to be specifically considered in the capping methodology to ensure compliance.
Security of supply	Not known	It may deter some potential applicants who might otherwise make excellent social workers.
Quality of entrants to the profession	No	It does not address the SWTF recommendation to the bursary as a lever to improve quality. There is no evidence that this system would reduce attrition rates and increase employability of graduates.
Fair	Yes	This option remains an enabler for lower social-economic groups.
Value for Money	Yes	It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course.
Affordable	Yes	It would reduce the overall cost of the bursary while ensuring that both eligible undergraduate and postgraduate students continue to receive some financial support. The number of bursary recipients will be capped.
Administration	No	There may be an increase in the cost of administering the bursary as means-testing is more complex than the current processes.
Widens participation	Yes	It would encourage widening participation as it would offer financial support to those students with the lowest income.
Flexible	No	Bursary is a “blunt instrument” and cannot be targeted at particular specialities or geographic areas.

Option 2: Only retain the postgraduate bursary with a cap on the number of students who receive a bursary

Title	Yes/No	Comment
Legally compliant	Yes	Within current legislation
No adverse	Yes	Will need to be specifically considered in the capping

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impact on equality		methodology to ensure compliance.
Security of supply	Not known	There is a lack of certainty about the effect on supply of applicants to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. This option could reduce the numbers of social work undergraduates qualifying each year as students may choose to take an undergraduate degree in a different subject, thereby reducing supply.
Quality of entrants to the profession	Yes	This option could result in a higher proportion of students undertaking the postgraduate route to becoming a social worker and thereby increasing the quality of outcomes for service users.
Fair	Depends on criteria	It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course, which would maintain the current level of postgraduate attrition rates.
Value for Money	Yes	Stakeholders suggest that value for money would be improved, as postgraduates are more likely to take up employment as a social worker.
Affordable	Yes	It would reduce the overall cost of the bursary while offering an incentive for graduates to consider becoming a social worker. The number of bursary recipients will be capped.
Administration	Yes	Costs would reduce as there will not be an undergraduate scheme and there will be fewer applications to process.
Widens participation	No	Undergraduates would not receive a bursary.
Flexible	No	Bursary is a “blunt instrument” and cannot be targeted at particular specialities or geographic areas.

Option 3: Retain undergraduate bursary from the second year and current postgraduate scheme remains as now with a cap on the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students who receive a bursary

Title	Yes/No	Comment
Legally compliant	Yes	Within current legislation
No adverse impact on equality	Yes	The funding differences between postgraduate and undergraduate routes may affect equality issues (though differences exist already with means testing for postgraduates).
Security of supply	Not known	The option removes financial support during first year of qualifying education at undergraduate level and may lead to a reduction in the numbers of applicants choosing to study social work.

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		HEIs may reduce the number of programmes at undergraduate level, leading to a reduction in the number of degree level social workers qualifying each year.
Quality of entrants to the profession	Yes	This option offers an opportunity to link the bursary to quality and achievement through the link to the formal assessment stage. It offers an opportunity for employers/partners to participate in bursary decisions, as they will be expected to participate in 'readiness for practice' assessments.
Fair	Yes	It retains bursaries during training increasing the likelihood of better outcomes for students who would otherwise have to work extensively during their course.
Value for Money	Yes	Funding would be targeted at students who are more likely to take up employment as a social worker.
Affordable	Yes	Savings would accrue as no bursaries will be paid to Year 1 undergraduate students. The number of bursary recipients will be capped.
Administration	Yes	Costs will be reduced by a reduction in the number of applications to process.
Widens participation	No	It retains the bursary as an enabler for lower income students but with no funding in year one for undergraduates.
Flexible	No	Bursary is a "blunt instrument" and cannot be targeted at particular specialities or geographic areas.

Option 4: End the social work bursary completely and reinvest in replacement schemes

Title	Yes/No	Comment
Legally compliant	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	Replacement schemes will need to be carefully considered to ensure they meet the current legislation.
No adverse impact on equality	Yes	The lack of financial assistance may deter those from lower socio-economic backgrounds applying, making it more difficult to ensure a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.
Security of supply	Not known	It could lead to a drop in applications for social work programmes or an increase in withdrawals, which may lead to a shortage of supply.
Quality of entrants to the profession	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	This would depend on the replacement schemes and therefore the impact on attrition rates, take-up or employment is unknown.
Fair	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	The level of debt for undergraduate social work students would increase. Undergraduate students will be eligible for a student loan (as currently). There will be limited support for postgraduate

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		students.
Value for Money	Yes	Would depend on the replacement schemes.
Affordable	Yes	It offers the greatest potential for savings.
Administration	Yes	Administration costs will reduce as the bursary will not be available.
Widens participation	No	Would depend on the replacement schemes
Flexible	Depends on replacement scheme(s)	There would be flexibility to implement a greater variety of incentives to enter the profession that could target specialities or geographical areas. Investment could be targeted at return to practice schemes rather than training students

Option 5: Create a new scheme based on the successful completion of the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE)

Title	Yes/No	Comment
Legally compliant	Yes	Within current legislation
No adverse impact on equality	Yes	All social work students would receive the payment, subject to detailed criteria being developed
Security of supply	Not known	It may deter some potential applicants who might otherwise make excellent social workers.
Quality of entrants to the profession	No	It may not create incentive for quality students to select this career path - experience from similar awards in other professions (such as teaching) have not seen significant impact on recruitment.
Fair	Depends on criteria	The level of debt for undergraduate social work students would increase. Undergraduate students will be eligible for a student loan (as currently). There will be limited support for postgraduate students.
Value for Money	Yes	It provides encouragement for graduates to work as registered social workers Employers would be able to provide financial support to students without affecting eligibility for a bursary. 25% of the payment may be payable in tax and national insurance (NI) - bursaries are seen as a grant and one-off payments such as suggested by this option are not seen as a grant.
Affordable	Yes	It will create savings by reducing the number of recipients to approximately 5,000 students per financial year.

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Administration	Yes	Eligibility criteria has not been developed but it would appear to be straightforward to implement.
Widens participation	No	All social work students would receive the payment, subject to detailed criteria being developed.
Flexible	No	It has the potential to be used flexibly when managing the workforce as it could be adjusted to take advantage of labour shortages in different parts of the country or different areas of social work practice by using differential rates of payment.

Annex 6: Social Work Bursary consultation response form

We request that you use the pro forma below to help us analyse the responses.

Plases indicate if you are completing this as an individual or on behalf of a group	
Number of people represented.	
Background/profession?	
Are you either an existing student prospective student?	
Are you employed in the education field?	

Question	Response
Options	
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?	

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<p>6. Do you agree with the evidence presented in the impact assessment on the costs and benefits? If not, please provide evidence</p>	
<p>Equalities: The public sector Equality Duty defines the following as protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, (in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination) and carers 'by association' with people sharing some of the characteristics.</p>	
<p>7. Is there a risk that any of the options would disadvantage people who share a protected characteristic? Please provide reasons for your answer</p>	
<p>8. Do any of the options create opportunities for advancing equality between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? If so how?</p>	
<p>General</p>	
<p>9. Do you think there are any other criteria that ought to be considered? If so which and why are they important.</p>	

Please reply by 5pm on Friday 27 July 2012.

Please send your completed response form to swbursaryconsutation@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Hard copy responses can be posted to Social Work Bursary Consultation
 Department of Health
 Room 2N14, Quarry House
 Quarry Hill
 Leeds LS2 7UE