



Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System
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Lord Lilley
House of Lords
London
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30 March 2020

Dear Lord Lilley,

Thank you for the question asked on 11 March 2020 during the debate on gender segregation in apprenticeships. You stated “My Lords, last year 48,000 young people, predominantly women and girls, applied to train as nurses in this country, but half were turned away because we ration the number of places for training in nursing. Why do we ration these places while unlimited numbers are able to study every subject from art history to zoology? Why do we pretend we have to recruit nurses abroad because not enough people in this country want to study nursing, when we are turning away half of those who do?”

I promised to respond to your question in writing.

In respect of the numbers of people applying to study nursing, there were 35,960 applicants to study nursing and midwifery at English providers at the UCAS January 15th 2020 application deadline compared with 34,030 at the same time in 2019. This is an increase of 1,930, or 6% in England. The Government has committed to deliver 50,000 more nurses in our NHS, and we want to support everyone who wants to become a nurse to enter a nursing career in the NHS, whatever their background. However, education providers decide the academic requirements against which they distribute offers. Some applicants will not meet the academic requirements and may be unsuitable for the intensive nature of nursing courses.

We do not ration the number of places on pre-registration nursing courses in England. Prior to 2017 nursing, midwifery, and many allied health students could apply for an NHS Bursary for tuition fees and living costs support. Having a centrally funded system placed an artificial cap on the number of training places that Universities offered. From August 2017, the Government changed the education funding system so that new students starting courses could access the Department for Education student loans system. Moving to the loans system removed that cap and enabled students on these courses to be at least 25% better off than under the previous system.

The Department of Health and Social Care has put in place significant actions to boost the supply of nurses, ranging from training more nurses, offering new routes into the profession, enhancing reward and pay packages to make nursing more attractive and improve retention, and encouraging those that have left to return to nursing.

You will be aware that in December 2019 the department announced new maintenance grant funding to further support students. This new grant will mean that from September 2020 students will have access to even more money than under previous funding systems, which will encourage more applicants to apply, accept places and complete their courses.

There are currently a number of pathways into nursing through the apprenticeship route that are available for individuals wishing to train as registered Nurses. A Nurse Degree Apprenticeship is available, which sees individuals qualify as registered Nurses on completion of a four year apprenticeship, gaining clinical experience and qualifications whilst 'on the job'.

The recently developed Nursing Associate role is also available as an apprenticeship. The Nursing Associate apprenticeship allows individuals to gain a foundation degree qualification and train as a Nursing Associate in two years, after which individuals can elect to undertake a shortened two year nursing degree to qualify as a registered Nurse.

Both of these apprenticeship pathways into nursing allow employers to grow their own domestic workforce and nursing talent pipelines, reducing reliance on overseas and agency staff.

We continue to see the numbers of Nurse Degree Apprentices increase as employers embed apprenticeships into their future workforce planning, with over 900 entering training last year alone. There are also now thousands of Nursing Associates who have entered training over the last three years and the Nursing Associate role continues to be a Government priority. The first cohorts of Nursing Associates began to complete their training and enter the workforce from January 2019, and are making a positive impact on patient care in a variety of settings every day.

Nursing apprenticeships will form an important contribution towards achieving the recent manifesto 50,000 Nurses commitment.

I hope this answer has been useful and will place a copy in the house libraries.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ER Berridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE