# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Social Work Bursary: additional financial support** |
| **DATE**  | **25 July 2022** |
| **BY** | **Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services** |

Social workers carry out a vital role within our communities, supporting people to take charge of their own lives. They are at the core of our social care system and key to the delivery of effective care, which makes a real difference to individuals and to the communities in which they live.

Social work is changing; people’s needs are changing, and cases are becoming more complex. The pandemic has added pressures to social work and recruitment and retention challenges are increasing.

Social Care Wales has been working with the sector to produce a social work workforce plan, which is due to be published this summer. However, to build capacity within the system, we need to support more people to train as social workers.

Last year, I confirmed we would introduce a change to improve the package of financial support available to social workers studying on the postgraduate qualification. Secondary legislation was introduced in May to do this from September 2022.

We are now going a step further and introducing an increase to the packages of financial support available to undergraduates and postgraduates through the Social Work Bursary, which is managed by Social Care Wales.

Eligible undergraduates studying for the social work degree will be able to access up to £3,750 per year over the three-year course through the Social Work Bursary. This is in addition to the funding available through Student Finance Wales.

Eligible postgraduates will have access to a total package of £12,851 per annum for the life of their two-year course, which includes a more than 50% increase to the Social Work Bursary. Further details of this new funding will be available on the Social Care Wales website.

While the packages for undergraduates and postgraduates work very differently, we have made improvements to both.

As set out in *A Healthier Wales*, our overall ambition for the health and social care workforce is for parity of esteem between the professions. This change reflects a significant move towards that for postgraduates, by increasing the grant funding available and reducing the loan element. This represents a more than 50% increase on the current bursary for both undergraduates and postgraduates.

In making these changes we have looked closely at the support available through the NHS Bursary. The Health Minister has announced a review will be carried out into the NHS Bursary to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. We will also consider whether further changes are needed to the Social Work Bursary, for both undergraduates and postgraduates, alongside the review of the NHS Bursary.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.