



12 September

Mr Ray James
Director of Health, & Adult Social Care
London Borough of Enfield
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Silver Street
Enfield
Middlesex
EN1 3XA

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Dear Mr James,

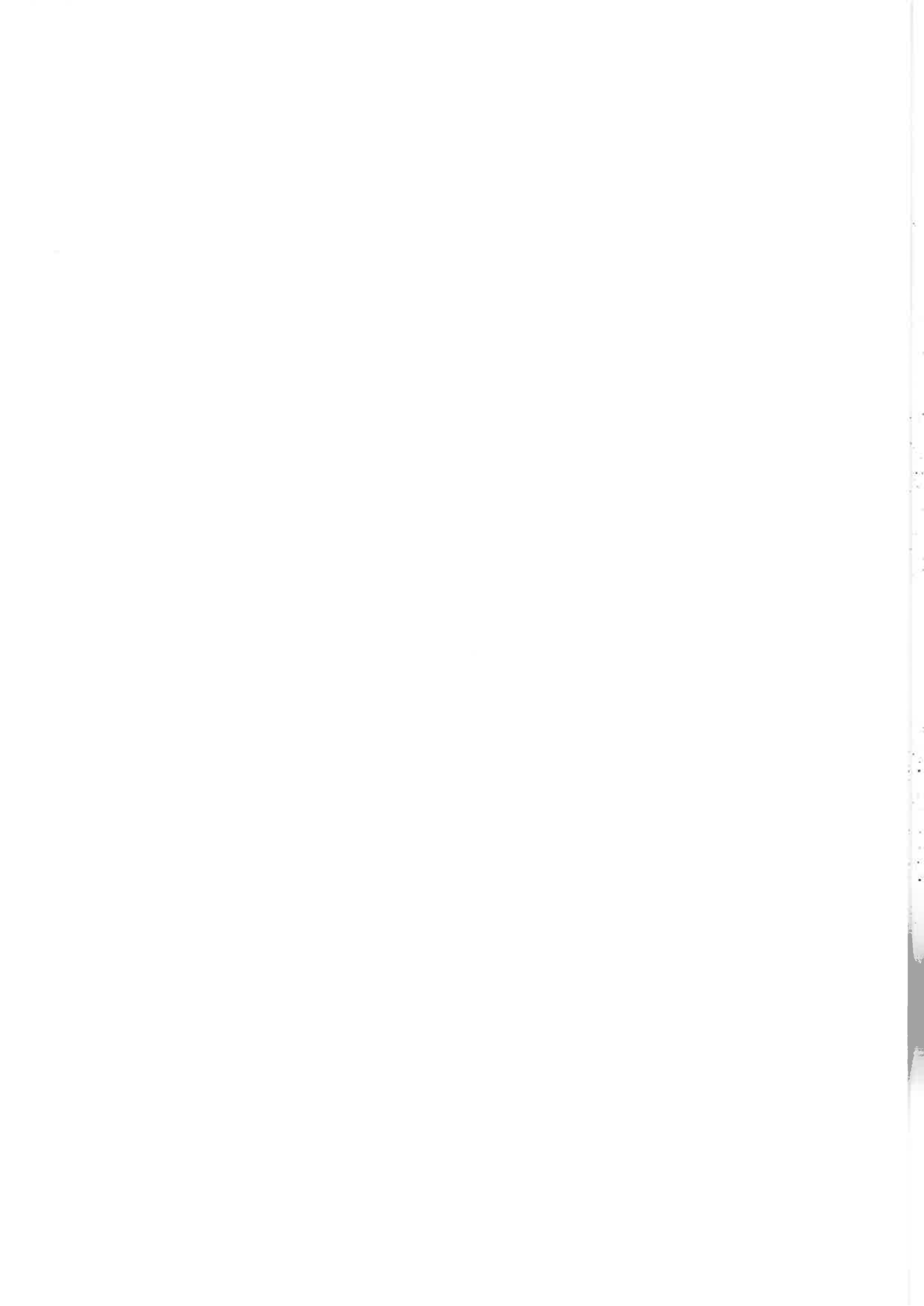
NHS bursary removal will reduce nursing supply in social care

UNISON is writing to all councils that have a responsibility to provide or commission adult social care services in England to warn them about the impact the Government's plan to remove NHS bursaries could have on the future nursing supply in the social care sector.

According to Skills for Care, there are approximately 51,400 registered nurses in adult social care. The importance of nurses to the social care system and the wider healthcare system has recently been highlighted by the pressures on Accident and Emergency Departments in hospitals across England. It has been reported that on the 30th November 2014 there were 5,200 patients in hospital who were ready for discharge but were not able to because there were not suitable care arrangements in place.

Some of this pressure on the health and social care system has been attributed to a shortage of nursing staff. The nursing vacancy rate in the social care sector is estimated to be around 7.6%. Experts predict that the shortage of nurses in the UK will continue for years to come and could get worse because of an ageing workforce, increasing demand and the uncertainty caused by leaving the EU.

In an attempt to create 10,000 additional training places by 2020, the Government plan to remove NHS bursaries in England and replace them with tuition fees and loans by September 2017. However, following this change, a student undertaking a full-time degree in nursing will see their total debt increase from approximately £6,930 to approximately £48,788 on graduation. London Economics predict that the increased cost to students will deter people from becoming a nurse and the changes may reduce current participation levels by 6-7% (or almost 2,000 students a year). Fewer nurses qualifying in 2020 will exacerbate the current shortage and have disastrous consequences for the local population, including vulnerable adults and elderly people in care homes, as patient safety is compromised.

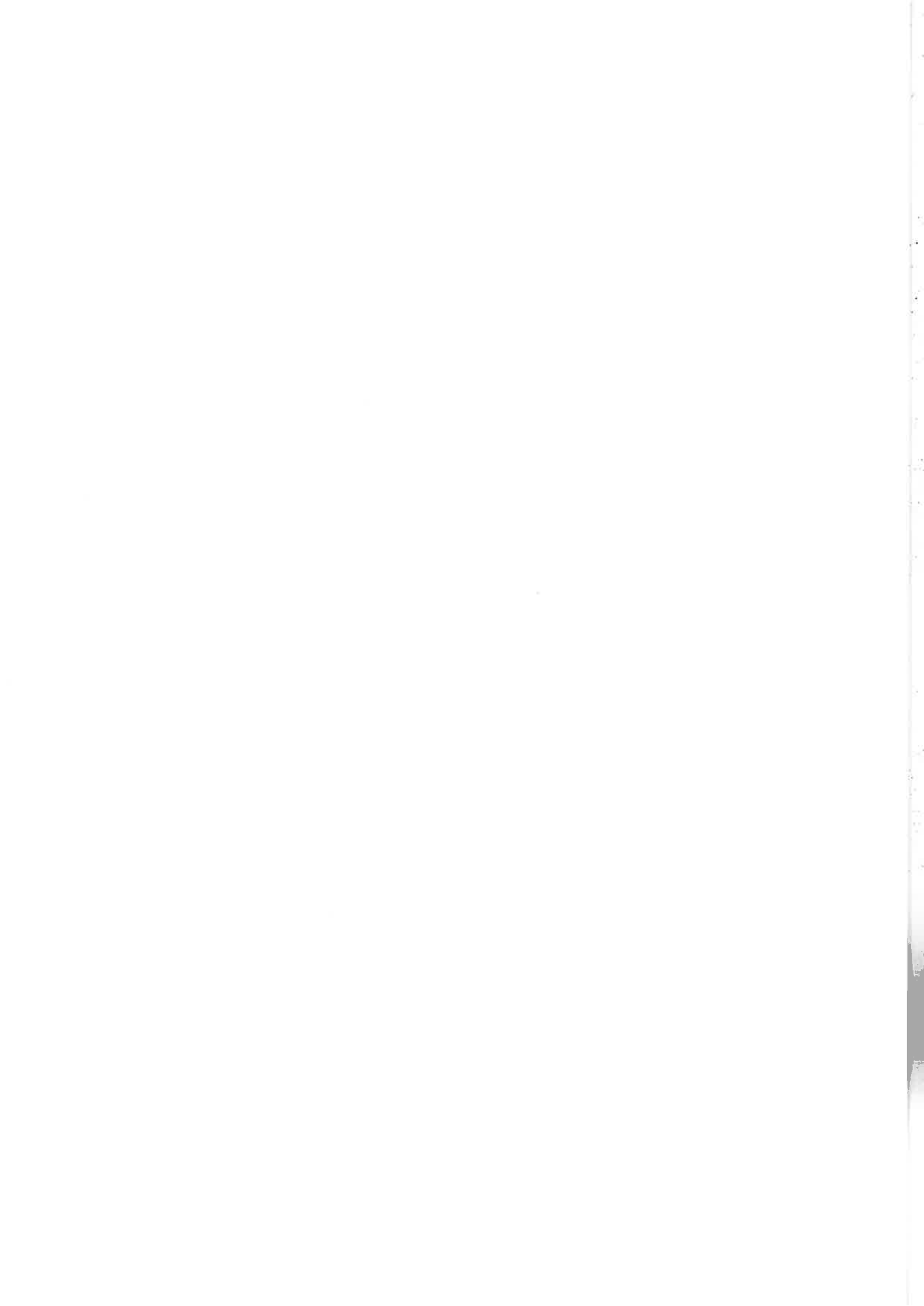


With the decline in the number of students, dependency on agency and overseas staff will increase. Councils with responsibility to provide or commission adult social care services and social care providers will see their staffing costs increase as they struggle to maintain safe staffing levels. At a time when the Nuffield Trust estimates that there will be a social care funding gap of between £2 billion and £2.7 billion in 2019/20 because of the Government's austerity agenda, further spending on expensive agency and overseas staff is an additional cost that councils and social care providers can ill afford.

UNISON, Britain's largest public service union, is not alone in having concerns about the scrapping of NHS bursaries. Other organisations and individuals have publicly raised their concerns about the changes too, including:

- The Mayor of London and the London Assembly
- Nursing Times
- Nursing Standard
- Nursing Practice
- King's Health Partners
- Association of District Nurse Educators
- Royal College of Nursing
- British Dental Association
- British Kidney Patient Association
- British Medical Association
- British Health Professionals in Rheumatology
- The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists/The College of Podiatry
- Foundation of Nursing Studies
- Institute of Health Visiting
- National Union of Students
- Neurological Alliance
- Patients Association
- Parkinson's UK
- The Queen's Nursing Institute
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Midwives
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Royal Mencap Society
- The Society and College of Radiographers
- Unite.

Nurses play a critical role in adult social care. It is imperative that the sector can be confident of the supply of nurses to meet future demand. If you share our concerns and those of many other organisations, UNISON urges your council and the Director of Social Services on your local health and wellbeing board to use our enclosed letter template to write to the Minister of State calling on the Government to put an immediate halt to the proposals to end NHS bursaries, until a long term and viable option has been identified which promotes the value of graduate and university degree educated health professions.



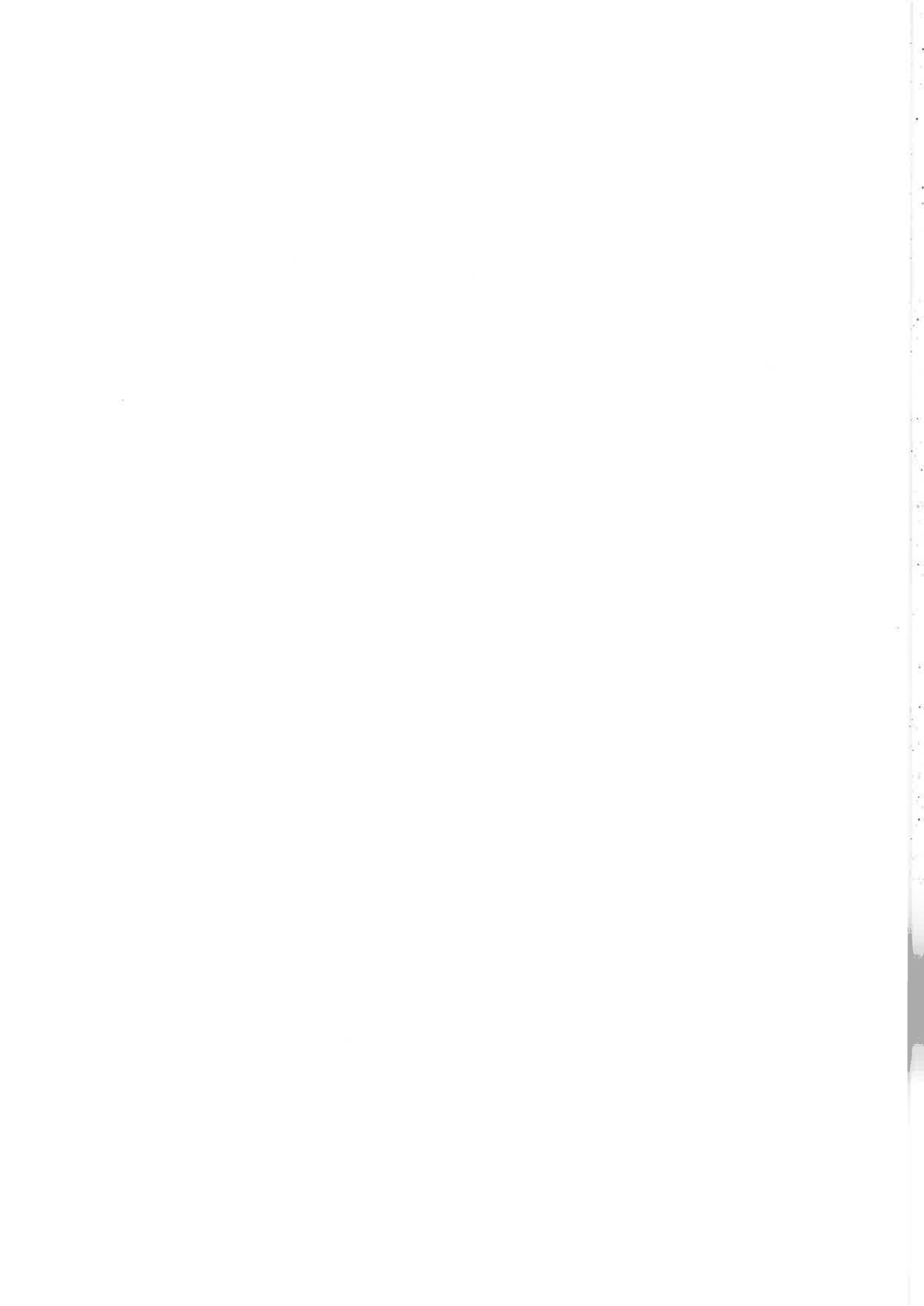
Your council and the Director of Social Services on your local health and wellbeing board should also call on the Government to consult properly and openly on how to improve the support available to nursing students, recognising the unique aspects of nursing degrees, and to increase the number of nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals.

If you would like UNISON to come and talk to you or your council and/or health and wellbeing board in more detail about the impact these changes will have on the future supply of nurses in social care, please contact James Randall by email j.randall@unison.co.uk or call on 0207 121 5232.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

Gail Adams
UNISON Head of Nursing



TEMPLATE LETTER

Philip Dunn MP

Minister of State at the Department of Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

[Date]

Dear Philip,

We are writing in response to the Government's changes in healthcare education funding.

We note the Government's plan to end NHS bursaries for training nurses, midwives and allied health professionals from September 2017. The bursaries will be replaced with student loans.

Student nurses are unlike other students. Often they are 'mature students' with dependents and spend 50% of their time in clinical placements as part of their qualification. This reduces their ability to access paid employment while in training. Nursing attracts a large number of mature students already saddled with debt from a first degree.

The Chancellor's claim that replacing bursaries with interest-bearing loans will free-up 10,000 new places for nurses is based on the demand for places under the current system. The current applicant to place ratio is an argument in favour of the Government financing more nursing bursaries, not an argument for the introduction of loans.

Research has not been conducted into how the introduction of fees will impact upon the application rate for nursing places. The Government does not know if the introduction of fees will exacerbate the current nursing shortage. There is a high risk that a loan system will be an obstacle to people from poorer backgrounds and those changing careers later in life.

If the increased cost to students deters people from becoming a nurse and fewer nurses are trained, it is reasonable to assume that social care will be impacted heavily by the decision to end the bursary system. According to Skills for Care, the vacancy rate for nurses in social care in England was 8% in September 2014. BUPA, who employ 5,000 nurses and senior nurses in 280 care homes and five care villages across the UK, caring for over 40,000 people, reported a vacancy rate of 13% for nurses nationally across the UK. Additionally, Four Seasons Healthcare reported carrying around 500 vacancies for nurses at any one time, a vacancy rate of around 10%.

Therefore, we believe recruitment and retention of nurses in social care will be made harder by the scrapping of student nurse bursaries.

If the number of qualified nurses declines, dependency on agency and overseas staff will increase in social care. At a time when the Nuffield Trust estimates that there will be a social care funding gap of between £2 billion and £2.7 billion in 2019/20, this is an additional cost that councils with responsibility for providing or commissioning adult social care services and care providers can ill afford.

We believe that the decision to scrap bursaries is driven by the desire to save money in the short-term and that, over the long-term, costs will be higher for social care both financially and in terms of UK trained workforce working in social care.

We call on the Government therefore to put an immediate halt to the plan to end NHS bursaries until a long term and viable option has been identified which promotes the value of graduate and university degree educated health professions. We also call on the Government to consult properly and openly on how to improve the support available to nursing students, recognising the unique aspects of nursing degrees, and to increase the number of nurses in social care.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Job title]