

Parity in Healthcare for all students and apprentices

Submitted by: Durham Students' Union

What's the problem?

Everyone has the right to access equitable healthcare. The current healthcare system is not designed to support a transient student and apprentice population that has continued to grow over recent years. The 2019 general election result suggests government policy over the next five years is likely to exacerbate students' and apprentices' inability to access healthcare, rather than improve it.

Students and apprentices form a large portion of the population in a lot of major cities across the UK. Students spend around two thirds of their year living in their university city, yet are only able to register permanently at one GP surgery at a time. On top of this, the infrastructure and processes of the National Health Service (NHS) make it inherently difficult for students and apprentices to access healthcare, such as having to undergo multiple referrals to different locations for one health issue, conform to rigid times for GP appointments, and pay charges for prescriptions and medical notes.

The NHS describe students as an atypical population, and thus GPs are encouraged to give special consideration to the types of issues likely to be common within student populations. We know that students experience lower wellbeing than young adults as a whole, and a 2019 survey of 38,000 students from 140 Universities, found that 21.5% of respondents had a mental health diagnosis studies, and can have a detrimental impact on their academic progression, retention and learning outcomes. Health issues that are then left unchecked become harder to tackle, and students find themselves in a perpetuating cycle of worsening health issues and an inaccessible healthcare system to improve them. can have a detrimental impact on their academic progression, retention and learning outcomes. Health issues that are then left unchecked become harder to tackle, and students find themselves in a perpetuating cycle of worsening health issues and an inaccessible healthcare system to improve them.

This difficulty in accessing healthcare is then coupled with sector-wide institutional policy demanding supporting medical evidence. This leaves students with no option but to battle through complex NHS infrastructure in order to access diagnoses and obtain the evidence they need to allow them fair academic assessment.

What could be the solution?

We want to live in a community that cares for and supports all members of that community equally. Students and apprentices form a large portion of the community in a lot of major cities across the UK, and should be able to access all benefits of being part of those communities as equal members. We believe access to healthcare is a crucial and fundamental one of those benefits.

We want students to have access to a flexible and efficient healthcare system that supports the transient nature of being a student, instead of impeding it. The NHS should be reviewed holistically, so that it better reflects the population in the UK now, rather than that of 70 years ago. Students should be able to

register fully at both their home GP and their university city GP, in order to have equitable access to healthcare in both their places of residence throughout the year. Referrals between healthcare agencies should be more collaborative and appointments in local services more flexible to cater to a student and apprentice population.

We believe that no student or apprentice should be at an academic disadvantage due to the inaccessible nature of the healthcare system. Medical notes and prescriptions should be free to all students in higher education. Institutional policies and procedures requiring medical notes should be reviewed and altered to be more streamlined, focussing on genuine necessity for medical evidence.

We know that health issues are prevalent within student and apprentice populations across the UK. We want to see a strengthened approach to healthcare that supports students to succeed.

Sub-proposals

These are policy proposals which have been submitted on this theme. These would have been considered as amendments to the main proposal, however as we have moved the votes and discussion online the DPC has decided to make these separate votes on the subject, to help set the direction of future officer's work. So the below proposals will be considered separately rather than as 'amendments' to the main proposal.

Sub-proposal 2

Submitted by University of Leicester Students' Union Delegate

At the very least, students should have access to a cheaper offer on government prepayment plans for prescriptions. At the minute this is £29.30 for 3 months and £104 for a year (which is helpful for someone taking several medications, but still difficult for students)